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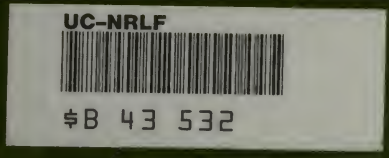

ASIATIC STUDIES

SIR ALFRED LYALL, K.C.B., D.C.L.

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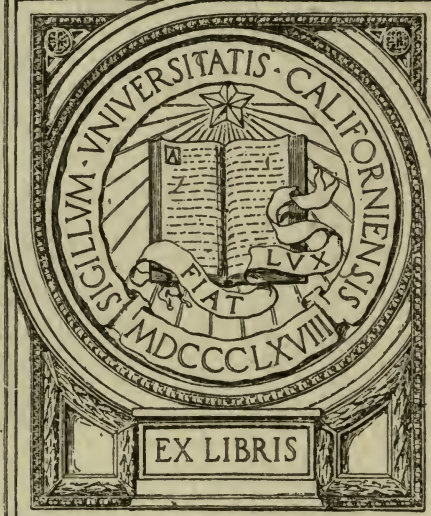

ASIATIC STUDIES

RELIGIOUS AND SOCIAL

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ASIATIC STUDIES

RELIGIOUS AND SOCIAL

BEING A SELECTION FROM ESSAYS PUBLISHED UNDER THAT TITLE IN 1882 AND 1899

BY

SIR ALFRED C. LYALL

K.C.B., D.C.L.

[ISSUED FOR THE RATIONALIST PRESS ASSOCIATION, LIMITED]

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PREFATORY NOTE

THE following essays, the seventh only excepted, were written in such intervals of leisure as could be spared by the constant and occasionally urgent preoccupations of official duties in India, and they have been thought to be worth the experiment of republication together. The first five relate to that country, being mainly the outcome of personal observation in certain provinces, and of intercourse with the people, while the sixth essay treats of the relations between the State and Religion in China. Since they are all so far alike in their subject-matter that they deal with the actual character and complexion of religion and society in these countries at the present time, they may possibly be considered to have some useful bearing on the general study of Asiatic ideas and institutions. For throughout Asia, wherever the state of society has not been distinctly transformed by European influences, there is a fundamental resemblance in the social condition of the people, in their intellectual level, and in their habits of thought. And although India is in many respects a peculiar country, isolated and fenced off from the rest of the continent by broad belts of high and often impassable mountain ranges, so that it cannot be classed either with Eastern or Western Asia, yet it possesses, by reason of its extraordinary variety of peoples, creeds, and manners, a strong affinity with the widely different countries on either side of it. No single first-class country of Asia, therefore, so well repays examination, and it is just this part of Asia in which Europeans have had incomparably the best opportunities of accurate and continuous observation. The essays may possibly add something to the store of information derived from Eastern experiences; may aid toward the exact appreciation of Indian life and thought, and to a knowledge, through India, of Asia; and may perhaps contribute materials of some special use to those who are engaged in the comparative study of religious and social phenomena generally.

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ASIATIC STUDIES

RELIGIOUS AND SOCIAL

I

RELIGION OF AN INDIAN PROVINCE

The actual religious condition of India, with its extraordinary variety of rites and worships, exemplifies the state of the civilised world in the ages of classic polytheism, before Christianity or Islam had arisen—A brief account of the religious beliefs in one province, Berar, may serve as a sample of Hinduism—Constant growth, movement, and change, of religious forms and conceptions—Classification, suggesting successive development, of the prevailing beliefs and liturgies, worship of things inanimate, of animals, of spirits, of ghosts, of divine incarnations, of the supreme Brahmanic gods—Some description of each class, with their connection and the gradual evolution of deities from ancestral spirits, saints, heroes, and demi-gods—Successful wonder-working the selecting agency whereby this evolution is carried on; and the system of divine embodiment often the process of transmutation into and assimilation with the higher deities of Brahmanism—Probability that the existing state of Hinduism will change with changes of environment.

THE general form and complexion of Hinduism is familiar enough to those who take interest in the subject of Asiatic religions. Many persons know that the Hindus are divided, as to their theology, into various sects, schools, and orders; that their orthodox Brahmanical doctrines express an esoteric Pantheism by an exoteric Polytheism; and that the mass of the people worship innumerable gods with endless diversity of ritual. A few students of India in England know a great deal more than this; but I doubt whether any one who has not lived among Hindus can adequately realise the astonishing variety of their ordinary religious beliefs, the constant changes of shape and colour which these beliefs undergo, the extraordinary fecundity of the superstitious sentiment—in short, the scope, range, depth, and height of religious ideas and practices prevailing simultaneously among the population of one country, or of one not very extensive province. It is not easy, indeed, for Europeans of this century to realise the condition even of a great continent in which there are no nationalities; or to perceive how in a mere loose conglomeration of tribes, races, and castes the notion of religious unity, or even of common consent by a people as to the fundamental bases of worship, can hardly be comprehended, much less entertained. For nationality is, as we know, a thing of modern growth; when Charlemagne restored the Western Empire, he swept within its pale not nations but tribes—Franks and Saxons—Lombards and Gauls—just as we have subdued and now rule, in India, Pathâns, Rajpûts, and Marathas. It is therefore, perhaps, by surveying India that we at this day can best represent to ourselves and appreciate the vast external reform worked upon the heathen world by Christianity, as it was organised and executed throughout Europe by the combined authority of the Holy Roman Empire and the Church Catholic. From this Asiatic standpoint, looking down upon a tangled jungle of disorderly superstitions, upon ghosts and demons, demi-gods, and deified saints; upon household gods, tribal gods, local gods, universal gods, with their countless shrines and temples, and the din of their discordant rites; upon deities who abhor a fly's death, upon those who delight still in human victims, and upon those who would not either sacrifice or make offering—looking down upon such a religious chaos, throughout a vast region never subdued or levelled (like all Western Asia) by Mahomedan or Chris-

tian monotheism, we realise the huge enterprise undertaken by those who first set forth to establish one Faith for all mankind, and an universal Church on earth. We perceive more clearly what classic polytheism was by realising what Hinduism actually is. We have been so much habituated in Europe to associate any great historic religion with the idea of a Church (if not in its mediæval sense, then in the sense of a congregation of the faithful), that most of us assign this kind of settled character and organic form to paganism, modern or ancient, so long as it is not barbarism. We are thus prone to assume that a people like the Hindus, with their history, literature, sacred books, and accumulated traditions, must by this time have built up some radical dogmas, or at least some definite conceptions of divinity, which the upper classes would have imposed on the crowds as limits to mere superstitious phantasy. For centuries Christianity has marched, along its entire settled frontier, with no other religion beside Mahomedanism, which has distinctive tenets and a firmly-set pale; therefore we do not readily appreciate the state of millions of Hindus to whom any such common bond or circumscription is altogether wanting. We can scarcely comprehend an ancient religion, still alive and powerful, which is a mere troubled sea, without shore or visible horizon, driven to and fro by the winds of boundless credulity and grotesque invention.

I have supposed, therefore, that it might be worth while to attempt a brief description of the actual condition, character, and tendencies of the religious beliefs now prevailing in one province of India. It will present, I believe, a fair average sample of Hinduism as a whole, like a pail of water taken out of a pond. But I do not purpose to draw the well-known figures of Brahmanic theology, nor to rehearse standard myths and heroic fables common to all India. The doctrine of Brahmanism, and the whole apparatus of its ceremonial, with its sects, orthodox or heterodox, flourish in this particular province much as they do in all others; I assume that the outline of them has been studied and understood. My present plan is to try whether the different superstitious notions and forms of worship which fall under everyday observation in an Indian district, can be arranged so as to throw any light upon recent theories as to the gradual upward growth and successive development of religion through connected stages. That the sphere of observation has, for the purposes of this essay, been mostly confined within provincial limits, is a condition not without certain advantages. By comparing different ages, diverse societies, and men under dissimilar physical environment, we may collect without difficulty every species and variety of superstition required to fit up our respective theories of religious evolution; and people have thus been accustomed to construct such theories upon materials drawn from an infinite diversity of habitations or races scattered over long periods of time. The convenience of ranging over such a wild field of selection may sometimes tempt us to ascribe to the customs and fancies of distant and greatly differing societies a closer relationship and inter-connection than really exist. But if the living specimens can all be gathered from one country, then their affinity may seem more demonstrable, and the manner of their sequence or descent more intelligible. At any rate, the actual facts may be thus brought more easily under a connected view, and within compass of accurate research; while it may be interesting (setting aside all theories) to observe a whole vegetation of cognate beliefs sprouting up in every stage of growth beneath the shadow of the great orthodox traditions and allegories of Brahmanism.

The province (commonly called Berar) from which I have drawn my facts is situated nearly in the centre of India; it is almost identical in area with the present kingdom of Greece on the main-

land; and it contains 2,250,000 inhabitants, of whom 155,000 are Musalmáns,[1] and the rest (of the natives) are loosely called Hindus. Now just as the word Hindu is no national or even geographical denomination, but signifies vaguely a fortuitous conglomeration of sects, tribes, races, hereditary professions, and pure castes, so the religion of this population of Hindus is at first sight a heterogeneous confusion. Without doubt much of this miscellany may be at once referred, for its source, to the composite character of its people. The Hindus proper, who can be ranged in known castes, have come in by migrations from North, South, and West; there is a strong non-Aryan leaven in the dregs of the agricultural class, derived from the primitive races which have gradually melted down into settled life, and thus become fused with the general community, while these same races are still distinct tribes in the wild tracts of hill and jungle. Nevertheless, the various superstitions have long ceased to correspond with ethnic varieties; they have even little accordance with gradations of social position or of civil estate. Moreover, the characteristic which, after close examination, most strikes an European observer, is not so much the heterogeneity of the popular religion taken at a glance, as the fact that it is a thing which is constantly growing; that it is perceptibly following certain modes of generation, transmutation, and growth, which point toward and lead up from the lower toward the higher kinds of belief. Here, as everywhere in like conditions, the floating and molecular state of society has prevented religious consolidation; while again the multiformity of religion reacts continually upon the society, subjecting its constitution to a perpetual *morcellement*. And the wedges which have riven asunder, and are keeping separate, the general mass of the Indian people are furnished and applied by the system of Caste. The two great outward and visible signs of caste fellowship, intermarriage and the sharing of food, are the bonds which unite or isolate groups. Now Caste seems to be the stereotype mould which has in India preserved those antique prejudices of blood and religion that have been worn out or destroyed in almost all countries of equal or inferior civilisation; and so far as caste is by origin Ethnological, Political, or Professional, its tendency in modern India is to subside and fade away out of active life. But to this threefold classification (by Professor Max Müller[2]) of the source of Indian caste must be added, I submit, a fourth term, Sectarian, meaning the castes which are produced by difference of religion, by new gods, new rites, new views, and new dogmas. While the three first-named sources are virtually closed, producing no fresh varieties, this fourth source is still open and flowing, and its effect upon the social fabric is still actively dissolvent. Where tribal and political distinctions are blending and amalgamating according to the ordinary operation of civilising forces, this process is in India continually interrupted and foiled by the religious element of disseveration; the community, instead of coalescing, is again split up by divergencies of doctrine, of ritual, or by some mere caprice of superstition, into separate bodies which eat and intermarry only among themselves, thus establishing and preserving isolation. New objects of adoration are continually being discovered and becoming popular; certain shrines get into fashion, or an image is set up, or a temple built; new prophets arise with fresh messages to deliver, or with fresh rules for a devout life. Holy men are canonised by the *vox populi* after death, or even attain apotheosis as incarnations of the elder gods; and these also have usually their recognised disciples. In fact, the chief among these moralists and miracle-workers are the founders of sects, and sects always tend to become subcastes. Thus the objects of Hindu

[1] 1868.

[2] "Chips from a German Workshop."

adoration are constantly changing, so that the Indian Pantheon, like the palace in the Persian parable, is but a caravanserai; the great dome of many-coloured glass endures with little change, but its occupants come and go. And these novelties of teaching or practice mark off the persons who adopt them; the devotees often become known by a separate denomination which denotes a peculiar discipline, or tenet, or perhaps only the exclusive worship of one god or deified man. So that, if a metaphor may be borrowed from physical science, we may say that in India all Hindu religions belong to the *fissiparous* order; they have the property of disseverance into portions, each of which retains life and growth. And as the direction taken by the development of any considerable sect is toward the formation of a caste, the result is that continual piecemeal disintegration by religious anarchy of the mass of society, which I have endeavoured to describe.

We can perceive the vestiges of similar tendencies even in Great Britain, where very peculiar sectaries, like the Quakers, have lived and married for generations among themselves, and where any radical antagonism of creeds is still a serious bar to matrimony. But the state of things in India can only be realised by supposing that the Irvingites, for instance, should have become, as an inevitable and obvious consequence of their distinctive tenets, a class so far drawn apart from the rest of England that marriage beyond the communion would be of disputable validity, and dining with them would compromise the social and religious reputation of Anglican Churchmen.[1]

To give any intelligible account of beliefs and liturgies thus complicated, some system of classification appears necessary. I have therefore attempted to adopt one, though I do not pretend to much confidence in the hypothesis which it involves. Taking as the lowest stage of religious thought that conception which seems the most narrow and superficial, and proceeding upward as the ideas which I suppose to lie at the root of each conception become wider and more far-fetched, I should distribute the popular worship that can now be witnessed within Berar into the grades here following. It should be explained that these divisions in no way denote separate bodies of exclusive votaries, nor do they correspond even with any parallel steps of civilised intelligence or of social position. The average middle-class Hindu might be brought by one part or another of his everyday religious practice within any or many of these classes, namely:—

1. The worship of mere stocks and stones, and of local configurations, which are unusual or grotesque in size, shape, or position.

2. The worship of things inanimate, which are gifted with mysterious motion.

3. The worship of animals which are feared.

4. The worship of visible things animate or inanimate which are directly or indirectly useful and profitable, or which possess any incomprehensible function or property.

5. The worship of a *Deo*, or spirit, a thing without form and void—the vague impersonation of the uncanny

[1] Much might be suggested here (in support of what the late Sir Henry Maine pointed out) upon the peculiar influence of the English law in arresting in India this process of constant change; in stereotyping institutions once found to exist, or perhaps only found by books to *have* existed, the facts having been long since transformed. A very notable example of this may be seen in the history and present state of the modern sect called *Brahmo Somàj*. They are philosophical deists, who disapprove of the common Hindu marriage ceremonies; but for a long time it was not safe for the Brahmoists to disregard them, because any material omission of the customary rites might invalidate their marriage in an English court of law. Had no such court existed, they would probably have gone their own way, and become a sub-caste, with matrimonial rules of their own, which would have been recognised as perfectly valid, for Brahmists, by all Hindus.

sensation that comes over one at certain places.

6. The worship of dead relatives, and other deceased persons known in their lifetime to the worshipper.

7. The worship of persons who had a great reputation during life, or who died in some strange or notorious way—at shrines.

8. The worship, in temples, of the persons belonging to the foregoing class, as demi-gods or subordinate deities.

9. The worship of manifold local incarnations of the elder deities, and of their symbols.

10. The worship of departmental deities.

11. The worship of the supreme gods of Hinduism, and of their ancient incarnations and personifications, handed down by the Brahmanic scriptures.

This category comprises, I think, all the different kinds of Fetichism and Polytheism which make up the popular religion of Berar. With the inner and higher sides of Hindu teaching and belief known in the country I do not now pretend to deal, except so far as these doctrines (which are usually to be respected as profound and serious) have degenerated into mere idolatry of symbols, a relapse to which they are constantly liable. And with regard to the varieties of worship in the catalogue just finished, they are, of course, deeply tinged throughout by the strong sky-light reflection of over-arching Brahmanism, whence the topmost classes now pretend to derive their meaning immediately. Yet it may be said of all (except perhaps of the latest classes in the series) that these ideas are not so much the offspring of Brahmanism as its children by adoption; they have not sprung out of any authoritative teaching or revelation which would control and guide their development, nor are they the decaying survivals either of a higher faith or of a lower superstition. They are living and fertile conceptions of species constantly germinating and throwing up new shoots in the present age, and in the country where they are found.

The Worship of Stocks or Stones, for instance, is an active species, which incessantly spreads and reproduces itself before our eyes, with different modifications that all eventually find their place and meaning in the general order of the people's religion. This worship has been placed in the lowest class, because it is taken to represent the earliest phase of Indian fetichism now existing. Let fetichism be defined as the straightforward objective adoration of visible substances fancied to possess some mysterious influence or faculty, then it may be supposed that the intelligence which argues that a stock or stone embodies divinity only because it has a queer, unusual form, expresses a low type of fetichism. And to this type I am disposed to refer, for their original idea and motive, all such practices as the worship of a stone oddly shaped, of a jutting bit of rock, a huge boulder lying alone in the plain, a circle of stones, a peculiar mark on the hill-side or a hummock atop, an ancient carved pillar, a milestone unexpectedly set up where none was before, with strange hieroglyphics, a telegraph post, fossils with their shell marks; in fact, any object of the kind that catches attention as being out of the common way. Now, the Brahmanic exclamation of this reverence for curious-looking things, especially for things conical and concave, is always at hand and producible to the earnest enquirer after divine emblems or manifestations; but these interpretations appear to belong to a later symbolism, which is habitually invented by the more ingenious to account, upon orthodox principles, for what is really nothing but primitive fetichism rising into a higher atmosphere. I mean that this worship would prevail in India if the Brahmanic symbolism had never been thought of—does prevail, as a fact, in other far-distant countries. For the feeling which actuates the uninitiated Indian worshipper of stocks and stones,

or of what are called freaks of Nature, is in its essence that simple awe of the unusual which belongs to no particular religion. It survives in England to this day in the habit of ascribing grotesque and striking landmarks or puzzling antiquities to the Devil, who is, or has been, the residuary legatee of all obsolete Pagan superstitions in Christian countries. In any district of India such objects or local configurations as the Devil's Quoits (near Stanton), the Devil's Jumps (in Surrey), or the Devil's Punch-bowl (in Sussex), would be worshipped; similar things are actually worshipped all over Berar, and in every case some signification, either mythical or symbolical, has been contrived or sanctioned by some expert Brahman to justify and authorise the custom. Yet it seems certain that among the vulgar there is at first no *arrière pensée*, or second meaning, in their adoration. The worshipper requires no such motive; he asks for no sign, offers no prayer, expects no reward. He pays reverent attentions to the Unaccountable Thing, the startling expression of an unknown power, and goes his way. It is not difficult to perceive how this original downright adoration of queer-looking objects is modified by passing into the higher order of imaginative superstition. First, the stone is the abode of some spirit; its curious shape or situation betraying *possession*. Next, this strange form or aspect argues some *design*, or handiwork, of supernatural beings, or is the vestige of their presence on earth; and one step further lands us in the world-wide regions of mythology and heroic legend, when the natural remarkable features of a hill, a cleft rock, a cave, or a fossil, commemorate the miracles and feats of some saint, demi-god, or full-blown deity. Berar is abundantly furnished with such fables, and beyond them we get, as I think, to the regarding of stones as emblems of mysterious attributes, to the phallic rites, to the Saligram, or fossil, in which Vishnu is manifest, and to all that class of notions which entirely separate the outward image from the power really worshipped. So that at last we emerge into pure symbolism, as when any thing appears to be selected arbitrarily to serve as a visible point for spiritual adoration. The present writer knew a Hindu officer of great shrewdness and very fair education, who devoted several hours daily to the elaborate worship of five round pebbles, which he had appointed to be his symbol of Omnipotence. Although his general belief was in one all-pervading Divinity, he must have something symbolic to handle and address.

It may be affirmed that the adoration of Things Inanimate having motion is, even in its rudest expression, more reasonable than the habit of staring with awe at a big stone, and may therefore be held to mark a slight advance towards higher levels. In Berar we have the worship of elements as fetich, of elements inhabited and directed by local spirits, and of elements with mythological origin or descent from the gods. Water runs up this whole gamut or scale of religious expression. The honours paid to a running brook, a hot spring, or to a river that alternately floods and falls —causing famine or abundance, bringing riches or ruin—are intended for the living water itself by a large class of votaries; and this notion of material identity seems preserved by the customs of bathing in sacred streams, of self-drowning, and of witch-dipping, which last custom resembles exactly that of England.[1] Suicide and witch-dipping in rivers present both sides of the same conception, acceptance or rejection by the divine element. Further on, the water-power is no longer deified Nature, but, controlled by a supernatural spirit, we have the kelpie who inhabits rivers under the form of a buffalo, and personifies their effects. His name is *Mahisoba;* he has no image, but a buffalo's head is cut off and deposited on his altar. After this

[1] It will be recollected that an old Frenchman was drowned in Essex, on suspicion of sorcery, so late as the year of grace 1863.

we ascend to mythologic fictions about the origin and descent of the greater rivers from the Hindu heaven, and to legends of streams turned, stopped, or otherwise engineered by interposition of the divine energy incarnate. The Southern Berar country is much tossed about by intersecting ridges and devious hill-ranges. The rivers pierce their way down from the watersheds by sharp angles and deep cuttings which suggest mighty forces. A torrent goes struggling and rushing through its channel, choked by huge rocks and broken by rapids. The muffled roar of its waters, which cease not night or day, affect the mind with a sense of endless labour and pain; you might well fancy that the river-god was moaning over his eternal task of cleaving stony barriers, and drawing down the tough basalt hills. Fire is a great Hindu Fetich, but it is nowhere in Berar generated spontaneously; and I believe that even the worship of *Agni*, the fire-god, has fallen to desuetude. The sun is the tribal god, as fetich, of the aboriginal *Korkus* who live apart among the northern hills of Berar; of course he is also worshipped by all Hindus under different conceptions and doctrines regarding his personality. Tree-worship has a wide range. A tree is first reverenced as a thing to be feared, having sentient existence and mysterious potency, as proved by waving branches and weird sounds. Next, fruitful trees are honoured for yielding good fruits, which are bestowed yearly in more or less quantity according to some hidden caprice that may possibly be propitiated; then a particular species becomes sacred to a well-known god; or a great solitary trunk becomes the abode of a nameless impalpable spirit; or a dark grove or thicket may be his habitation. Soon this is perceived to be ground sacred to one of the acknowledged Hindu deities, with recognised titles and attributes, either by having got woven into some myth or local legend, or because some pious person sets up a temple therein, or because an anchorite fixes his hermitage there, and devotes himself to a particular divinity. There are several thickets and clumps of trees in Berar from which no stick is ever cut, nor even the dead wood picked up, though firewood is scarce and timber valuable. A temple, or shrine, will usually be found among the trees, but the sanctity of the spot does not necessarily derive from the building, the converse is more likely to be the case; and I conjecture that these dim and dusky retreats have usually been at first consecrated to the gods by some alarming accident, or apparition, which betokened the presence of a deity.

It does not seem hard to trace up thus in India, from the root of primitive tree-worship, the growth and ramification of the innumerable customs which, in the East, as once in England, ascribe essential virtues to certain trees in matters of ritual use and magic practice. In Berar different families are said to pay exclusive honour to certain kinds of trees; the rod of a special wood still divines water, and witches are scourged with switches of the castor-oil plant, which possesses sovereign virtue in the exorcising and dislodging of the evil power. It has been said that the English held hazel-wood to be of specific efficacy in both cases, for detecting water and witches; while the Maypole and the mistletoe are supposed to be relics of early Keltic tree-worship. But in England the pedigree of these customs is dim, dubious, and disputable; the Church has for ages been denouncing and stamping out the ancient indigenous superstitions. Whereas in India the aboriginal autochthonic ideas of the country folk have been subjected to no persecution by dominant faiths, so that the entire concatenation of these ideas may be exhibited and tested within one province; the various practices and beliefs are alive before us; the sequence of them is close; we can collect the evidence of our eyes, and verify it by cross-examination of devout believers, men far above the mental calibre of ignorant savages and rude peasants.

The worship of Animals, which by their appearance or habits alarm and startle human beings, is so obvious in its primitive reason, and so common throughout India, that it needs no detailed description for Berar. Of course, the tiger, wolf, monkey, serpent—and, above all serpents, the *cobra*—are the most prominent objects of reverence. Some modifications and later aspects of the primordial instinct towards propitiation of a fearsome beast may be noticed. For instance, a malignant tiger's body may be possessed by the unquiet ghost of a dead man, or it may be the disguise adopted by a living sorcerer of evil temper. In another province an old witch, suspected of roving at night under a striped skin, had all her teeth knocked out to disable her. Here we have the transition from a simple Fetich to the idea of a disembodied spirit, and of possession. Then the idea gets completely superhuman; the tiger is an evil demon, without antecedent connection with humanity; and the terror spread abroad by such a pest become wholly preternatural has led to the institution of a departmental god, just as a violent epidemic necessitates a special administration to control it. Any application having reference to the ravages of a tiger may be addressed to *Waghdeo*, though the particular beast who vexes you should also be cajoled with offerings. But the most complete and absolute elevation of an animal to the higher ranks of deified beings is to be seen in the case of *Hanumàn*, who from a sacred monkey has risen, through mists of heroic fable and wild forest legends, to be the universal tutelary god of all village settlements. The setting-up of his image in the midst of an hamlet is the outward and visible sign and token of fixed habitation, so that he is found in every township. Ward, in his work on the Hindu religion, says that the monkey is venerated in memory of the demigod Hanumàn, which seems to be plainly putting the cart before the horse, for the monkey is evidently at the bottom of the whole story. Hanumàn is now generally supposed to have been adopted into the Hindu heaven from the non-Aryan or aboriginal idolatries; though, to my mind, any uncivilised Indian of this day, Aryan or non-Aryan, would surely fall down and worship at first sight of such a beast as the ape. Then there is the modern idea that this god was really a great chief of some such aboriginal tribe as those which to this day dwell almost like wild creatures in the remote forests of India; and this may well be the nucleus of fact at the bottom of the famous legend regarding him. It seems as if hero-worship and animal-worship had got mixed up in the myth of Hanumàn. At any rate, his traditions and attributes illustrate curiously the process by which a mere animal fetich, dreaded for his ugliness and half-human ways, soon rises to be an elfin king of the monkey tribe, next becomes a powerful genius, and latterly emerges into the full glory of divine *Avatár*, surrounded by the most extravagant fables to explain away the simian head and tail which have stuck to him through all his metamorphoses.

Some examples may be given of the simple and superficial indications which suffice to prove divine manifestations in animals. The goat has a peculiar trick of shivering at intervals, and this is taken to be the *afflatus*. In the North of India he is turned loose along a disputed border-line, and where he shivers there is the mark set up; the Thugs would only sacrifice a goat if the patroness *Devi* had signified acceptance by one of these tremors, but then they washed the animal to make him shake himself the quicker.[1] Obviously this habit (like the bray of an ass, which is one of the strongest omens) is ascribed to supernatural seizure, because it is uncertain,

[1] Plutarch mentions that among the Greeks the test whether a goat was in a fit state for the sacrifice that preceded the interrogation of an oracle was by cold water. If the animal did not shiver and shake himself when the water was thrown over him, the offering was not judged acceptable to the god.

inexplicable, and apparently motiveless. I remark, in passing, that the scapegoat is an institution widely known and constantly used in India. The cat seems to be comparatively unnoticed by Indian credulity, though her squalling at night boded ill to Thugs; and it may be guessed that only in lands where the great carnivora have been exterminated does she keep up the last faint relics of primitive animal-worship. With wild beasts that are a real plague and horror she has no chance in competition for the honours of *diablerie;* but her nocturnal wanderings, her noiseless motions, and her capacity for sudden demoniac fierceness distinguish her from other domesticated animals, so that her uncanny reputation still survives among the obscure pagan superstitions yet haunting us under the name of witchcraft.

The worship of Things and creatures beneficial might be classed apart from and after that of puzzling and menacing things, dead or alive, because the idea of gratitude and of boons attainable by propitiations seems a step in advance of the idea of averting ills. I have already alluded to the reverence paid to fruitful trees; and every one knows that horned cattle, the wealth of a simple society, are adored throughout India. Comte remarks that this feeling has preserved certain species of plants and animals through the ages when no ownership existed to protect them; but after all they were really preserved by the universal appreciation of their value; and worship was only the savage man's expression of his sense of that value, combined with his ignorance of the laws which gave or withheld it.

Next after Plants and Animals, in the order of progress from the simple to the more complex notions, might be placed the grotesque practice of worshipping Implements, Utensils, and generally the tools of the trade or craft by which one subsists. Not only does the husbandman pray to his plough, the fisher to his net,[1] the weaver to his loom, but the scribe adores his pen and the banker his account books. Each sets up the thing itself as a fetich, does it homage, and makes offering before it. To ascribe to the implements the power which lies in the guiding hand or brain is at least a thought farther fetched than to adore the generation of fruit on a tree, or the swelling udders of a cow; while the same fancy survives and is reflected over and over again, in the legends of mediæval magic, of magic swords, enchanted armour, seven-leagued boots, and the like. Moreover, it may be permissible to regard this tool-worship of the Hindus as the earliest phase or type of the tendency which later on leads those of one guild, or of the same walk in life, to support and cultivate one god who is elected, in lieu of individual tool-fetiches melted down, to preside over their craft or trade interests.

Up to this point I have been trying to classify the different kinds of worship of palpable objects, or, at farthest, of substances which by their shape or their qualities appear to evidence possession by a spirit, or the working of a superhuman occult power. The idea which suggests fear and (consequently) worship of Spiritual beings invisible, without form, name, or specific substantiality, is, I suppose, deeper and more abstract. It pervades the whole religious atmosphere of central India. Every mysterious, gruesome-looking dell, cavern, steep pass, and wild, desolate hill-top or ridge has its *Deo*, never seen of man, but felt by those who visit the spot—by shepherds and herdsmen camping out far amid the melancholy wolds, or by travellers along the lonely tracks. The notion of fixed habitation in, and identity with, some object has now expanded into the notion of a *haunting*. But the whereabouts is sometimes marked by a heap of stones, sometimes by rags tied

[1] Compare Habakkuk, i. 16: "Therefore they sacrifice unto their net," etc. Of this custom, the most sensational example was to be found among the Thugs, who used to worship the pick-axe which they carried for speedy burial of their victims on the spot of the murder.

to a bush; occasionally by chains suspended mystically from a cliff or a tree; or the spirit wanders round a huge old banyan-tree or ruined temple.[1] As yet, however, he has no name, no history or distinct origin, and his range is limited territorially. Yet within the uncertain limits of his haunt he can make himself very obnoxious if not duly propitiated; and, fortunately, there are always to be found pious men who have devoted themselves to deciphering (for a consideration) the signs of his displeasure.

This is, I conjecture, the dim *penumbra*, the vague floating *deisidaimonia*, which envelops embryonic conceptions of positive forms belonging to deities recognisable by name and character. We may surmise that this misty zone must have been passed through before a clearer air was first reached; before people gradually evolved out of these shadowy terrors the definite outline of their anthropomorphism. And this stage may perhaps mark the first imaginings of superhuman beings finally dissociated from their visible shells—that is, from their manifestations as individuals through natural substances, a stone, a tree, or a beast. The next step after this may be guessed to be the investing of this unseen intangible spirit with a man's individuality, though without a visible body; and thus the transition to anthropomorphism—from unseen spirits in general to unseen spirits in particular—is represented, as I venture to infer, by the worship of the ghosts of dead relatives. For it is easier to imagine that the active intelligence and familiar soul which have just left a corpse still exist round you in an invisible personality, than to abstract the notion of definite spiritual beings belonging by origin to an order quite distinct from humanity. Thus, in Berar, the aboriginal tribes, which are as yet little touched by Brahmanic doctrines, practise most elaborate and singular obsequies known by a name which may be accurately translated into the Irish term *wake*, meaning a vigil. The ceremony includes that very suggestive practice (known also to Brahmanic rites) of bringing back to his house the dead person's soul, supposed to have lost its home by the body's death. A stone, or some such object, is picked up at the grave, and carried reverentially back to the house, where it is worshipped for a few days, and then decently disposed of. There are also libations and a funeral banquet, sacrifices over the grave to an effigy, and the mourners sing an elegy of which this is the curiously familiar burden :—

> "Naked he came, and naked has gone,
> This dwelling-place belongs neither to you nor to me,
> To the life which has gone."

The ordinary funeral chant over a Hindu says, "He who spoke has gone"; and this idea, like the phrase so commonly used in all countries, to express death—that the breath, the visible token of life, has departed—points to the flitting of something animated and even material. Though it issues forth from the corpse, it must be still somewhere, probably still hovering about its former home and friends. Now, the direct motive and purpose of these earliest and most primitive mortuary rites are, I believe, the laying of the ghost; but from the wailing adoration of these non-Aryan woodlanders, up to the ceremonious annual oblations and invocations of the high-caste Hindu, they are throughout more or less a kind of worship. And at this point we have to look for some explanation of the process by which other less narrow and less obvious ideas of supernaturalism may be conjectured to have developed out of this universal necrolatry. The reverent mind appears to me to rise, by a natural method of

[1] Mr. Bowring, in his "Eastern Experiences" (1871), describes the Spirit-houses found in the Mysore forests—little sheds built over the white ant-hills, and dedicated (as I understand) to the wood-demons generally. Captain Forsyth, writing about the highlands of Berar, mentions that when the Gonds fell the wood on a hillside, they leave a little clump to serve as a refuge for the elf, or spirit, whom they have dislodged.

selection, from the indiscriminate adoring of dead persons known or akin to the worshipper's family during life, to the distinctive worship of persons who were of high local repute while they lived, or who died in some remarkable way. It would seem that the honours which are at first paid to all departed spirits come gradually to be concentrated, as divine honours, upon the Manes of notables; probably the reasoning is, that they must continue influential in the spirit-world. For, so far as I have been able to trace back the origin of the best-known minor provincial deities, they are usually men of past generations who have earned special promotion and brevet rank among disembodied ghosts by some peculiar acts or accident of their lives or deaths, especially among the rude and rough classes. With the communities of a higher mental level, different motives for the selection prevail, but of this more hereafter. Popular deifications appear to have been founded, in their simplest form, on mere wonder and pity, as for mental and bodily afflictions, or an affecting incident, such as the death of a boy bridegroom (now the god *Dulha Deo*) in the midst of his own marriage procession;[1] or on horror at terrible and lamentable deaths, as by suicide, by wild beasts, by murder, or by some hideous calamity. Human sacrifice has always been common in India as a last resort for appeasing divine wrath, when manifested in a strange and inexplicable way; and it is suspected to be still the real motive of occasional mysterious murders. *Chând Khan* is a demon rather than a deity, but his tomb is worshipped on one bastion of every mud-fort in the Dekhan. The legend (without doubt founded on fact) is, that a man thus named was buried alive under some bastion of which the building had been supernaturally thwarted until this sacrifice was made, when all hindrance and mysterious opposition ceased at once. Some years ago the piers of a railway bridge under construction in central India were twice washed away, when nearly finished, by the floods, and a rumour spread abroad among the Bheels of the neighbouring jungles that one of them was to be seized and sacrificed by the engineers who had received such manifest proof of mysterious opposition to their work.

The Bunjâras, a tribe much addicted to highway robbery, worship a famous bandit, who probably lived and died in some notorious way. Any renowned soldier would certainly be worshipped after death if his tomb were well known and accessible. M. Raymond, the French commander who died at Hyderabad, has been there canonised after a fashion; General Nicholson (who died in the storming of Delhi, 1857) was adored as a hero in his lifetime, in spite of his violent persecution of his own devotees, and there are other known instances of the commemoration of Europeans who have been feared or loved. Nor do I make out that the origin and conception of these local deities are at first connected with the Brahmanic doctrines by the unlettered and unsophisticated crowd who set up these shrines at their own pleasure. The immediate motive is nothing but a vague inference from great natural gifts, or from strange fortunes, to supernatural visitation, or from power during life to power prolonged beyond it, though, when a shrine becomes popular, the Brahmans take care to give its origin an orthodox interpretation. The saint or hero is admitted into the upper circles of divinity, much as a successful soldier or millionaire is recognised by fashionable society, takes a new title, and is welcomed by a judiciously liberal aristocracy.

Between the class of dead men who

[1] Compare the legends of Thammuz, Adonis, Ganymede, and Hylas. Mere grief at bereavement may be another motive. See "Wisdom of Solomon," xiv. 15: "For a father afflicted with untimely mourning, when he hath made an image of his child soon taken away, now honoured him as a god which was then dead. Thus, in course of time, an ungodly custom grown strong was kept as a law."

are worshipped from feelings of admiration, surprise, pity, or terror, and the class of deified Saints, the line which might be drawn would, I consider, make a step upward. The common usage of adoring the spirit of a *Sati* (or widow who has burnt herself on the pyre of her husband) at the cenotaph put up on the spot, may perhaps be taken as an intermediate link; for she has been exalted both by the horror of her ending and the supreme merit of her devotion.[1]

Of the numerous local gods known to have been living men, by far the greater portion derive from the ordinary canonisation of holy personages. This system of canonising has grown out of the world-wide sentiment that rigid asceticism and piety, combined with implicit faith, gradually develop a miraculous faculty. The saint or hermit may have deeper motives—the triumph of the spirit over corrupt matter, of virtue over vanity and lusts, or the self-purification required of mediæval magicians and mystical alchemists before they could deal with the great secrets of Nature; but the popular belief is, that his relentless austerity extorts thaumaturgic power from reluctant gods. And of him who works miracles do they say in India, as in Samaria they said of Simon Magus, "This man is the great power of God"; wherefore after death (if not in life) he is honoured as divine indeed. Now, the word miracle must not be understood in our sense of an interposition to alter unvarying natural laws, for in India no such laws have been definitely ascertained; it means only something that passes an ordinary man's understanding, authenticated and enlarged by vague and vulgar report. And the exhibition of marvellous devotion or contempt for what is valued by the world stimulates inventive credulity. He who does such things is sure to be credited with miracles, probably during his life, assuredly after his death. When such an one dies his body is not burnt, but buried: a disciple or relative of the saint establishes himself over the tomb as steward of the mysteries and receiver of the temporalities; vows are paid, sacrifice is made, a saint's-day is added to the local calendar, and the future success of the shrine depends upon some lucky hit in the way of prophecy or fulfilment of prayers. The number of shrines thus raised in Berar alone to these anchorites and persons deceased in the odour of sanctity is large, and it is constantly increasing. Some of them have already attained the rank of temples, they are richly endowed, and collect great crowds at the yearly pilgrim gatherings, like the tombs of celebrated Christian martyrs in the Middle Ages. But although the shrines of a Hindu ascetic, and of St. Thomas of Canterbury, may have acquired fame among the vulgar and ignorant by precisely the same attribute —their reputation for miraculous efficacy —yet the only point of resemblance between the two cases is this common inference from eminent sanctity in the world to wonder-working power in the grave. For whereas the great Catholic Church never allowed the lowest English peasant to regard St. Thomas or St. Edmund as anything higher than glorified intercessors, with a sort of delegated miraculous power, the Indian prophet or devotee does, by the patronage of the Brahmans, rise gradually in the hierarchy of supernatural beings, until his human origin fades and disappears completely in the haze of tradition, and he takes rank as a god. We see by this example of India what the Church did for the medley of pagan tribes and communities which came within her pale in the dark ages of anarchic credulity, before great Pan was quite dead. In those days, when, according to Milman,[1] saints were

[1] Compare Euripides, "Alcestis," 995: "Nor let the tomb of thy wife be accounted as a mound over dead that perish, but let it be honoured equally with the gods, for travellers to worship. And some one going up the winding path shall say, 'She once died for her husband, and is now a blest divinity' (*νῦν δ'ἐστὶ μάκαιρα δαίμων*)."

[1] "Latin Christianity," vol. vi. pp. 13, 417.

"multiplied and deified" by popular suffrage, when "hardly less than divine power and divine will was assigned to them," when the "wonder-fed and wonder-seeking worship" of shrines and relics actually threatened to "supersede the worship of God and His Son," it may be almost surmised that nothing but a supreme spiritual authority saved Christianity from falling back for a time into a sort of polytheism.

But, in India, whatever be the original reason for venerating a deceased man, his upward course toward deification is the same. At first we have the grave of one whose name, birthplace, and parentage are well known in the district; if he died at home, his family often set up a shrine, instal themselves in possession, and realise a handsome income out of the offerings; they become hereditary keepers of the sanctuary, if the shrine prospers and its virtues stand test. Or if the man wandered abroad, settled near some village or sacred spot, became renowned for his austerity or his afflictions, and there died, the neighbours think it great luck to have the tomb of a holy man within their borders,[1] and the landholders administer the shrine by manorial right.[2] In the course of a very few years, as the recollection of the man's personality becomes misty, his origin grows mysterious, his career takes a legendary hue, his birth and death were both supernatural; in the next generation the names of the elder gods get introduced into the story, and so the marvellous tradition works itself into a myth, until nothing but a personal incarnation can account for such a series of prodigies. The man was an *Avatár* of Vishnu or Siva; his supreme apotheosis is now complete, and the Brahmans feel warranted in providing for him a niche in the orthodox Pantheon.

It is scarcely worth while to enumerate for English readers the instances upon which this sketch of religious growth in Berar has been drawn out. This could be done only by giving a list of barbarous-sounding names of places and personages; but the details on which I rely could be produced, if want of space did not prevent it, and if they were of any value beyond the province. Of wonder-working saints, hermits, and martyrs (for Mahomedan and even Christian tombs are worshipped occasionally by Hindus) the name is legion. There are some potent devotees still in the flesh who are great medicine men, others very recently dead who exhale power, and others whose name and local fame have survived, but with a supernatural tinge rapidly coming out. Above these we have obscure local deities who have entirely shaken off their mortal taint; while beyond these again are the great provincial gods. Four of the most popular gods in Berar, whose images and temples are famous in the Dekhan, are *Kandoba*, *Vittoba*, *Beiroba*, and *Bâlâji*. These are now grand incarnations of the Supreme Triad; yet, by examining the legends of their embodiment and appearance upon earth, we obtain fair ground for surmising that all of them must have been notable living men not so very long ago.

Such is, so far as one can trust personal enquiry and observation, the regular process of Theogony, or the generation of local gods, which is constantly going on before our eyes in the districts of central India. We have before us there the worship of dead kinsfolk and friends, then the particular adoration of notables recently departed; then of people divinely afflicted or divinely gifted, of saints and heroes known to have been men; next the

[1] A good instance will be found in the history of Mira Bâi, an authentic princess of the Jypore house, who is now worshipped by a sect as their patron saint. They say that she vanished from earth through the fissure of a rock. So did a woman in West Berar, not many years ago.

[2] In Afghanistan, certain villagers close to our frontier recently arranged to strangle a saint who abode among them, in order to secure his tomb within their lands. There is a similar story, in Southey's ballads, of a design upon St. Romuald, which is styled by the Spanish chronicler a "determinacion bestial y indiscreta."

worship of demi-gods, and, finally, that of powerful deities retaining nothing human but their names and their images. It is suggested that all these are links along one chain of the development of the same idea; and that out of the crowd of departed spirits whom primitive folk adore, certain individuals are elevated to a larger worship by notoriety in life or death. At this point a different selecting agency comes into play, that of successful Wonder Working; and it is by the luck of acquiring a first-class reputation for efficacious answers to vows that some few Manes emerge into a still higher and more refined order of divinity. This is the kind of success which has made the fortune of some of the most popular, the richest, and the most widely-known gods in Berar, who do all the leading business, and possess the confidence of the respectable and substantial professions. It should be remarked that the earliest start of even a first-rate god may have been exceedingly obscure; but if he or his shrine makes a few good cures at the outset (especially among women and valuable cattle), his reputation goes rolling up like a snowball. One of the largest annual fairs in Berar now gathers round the grave of an utterly insignificant hermit. It thus becomes easy to perceive how the source of a far-flowing religion may be lost in obscurity; so that in later times, when the divinity, or the sect, has become famous, no one will accept the suggestion of a slight or humble, or accidental, origin for so great a development. The scholar explains the fact by some picturesque theory of mythical evolution; the devout believer builds up the traditions of some extraordinary life, full of miracles and mystic utterances.

Thus successful thaumaturgy, with lapse of time sufficient to evaporate the lingering flavour of mortal origin, are the two qualifications which lead to a high status among gods. But interests and a good connection open out short cuts to distinction for gods as well as for men. When the original saint or hero belonged in the flesh to a particular tribe, caste, or profession, in such case he may become the tutelary deity of that community, and is less dependent on continual proof of his efficacy, because the worship of him by his constituents is a point of honour, tradition, and *esprit de corps*. On the other hand, a god patronised exclusively by one trade or calling is liable to drop into a department by contracting a speciality for the particular needs and grievances of his congregation. But this is so far from being the natural ultimate mould into which polytheism falls, that gods now universally venerated have occasionally expanded, like Diana of the Ephesians, far beyond the circle of departmental practice. Comte's view of the development of polytheism is, that man gradually generalised his observations of Nature, grouping all the phenomena which resembled each other as the acts or characteristics of a Person, so that a cluster of similar Fetiches were amalgamated into one personification of the natural department to which they all belonged, which thus came forth as a god with special attributes. But this departmental system is only one side of polytheism, which in no time or country has been rigidly distributed into bureaux or portfolios with one supreme Jupiter, like the French Imperial Government. The Hindus, at any rate, have a multitude of gods very high in estimation, and with a large *clientèle*, who preside over no special forces of Nature, and have no exclusive province, but subsist solely upon their general reputation for good or bad influence over human affairs. The names of these deities are gradually noised abroad, the circle of their local notoriety widens, the crowd at their annual holy-day increases, the offerings attract Brahmans and the leading ascetic orders, who sing their praise, proclaim their miracles, and invent for them orthodox pedigrees. Soon a great prince visits, and perhaps endows, their temple; until at last the deity throws aside all separate functions, and

is set up firmly as an all-powerful manifestation of the great Creators and Rulers of the Hindu universe.

On the whole, therefore, there is good evidence for concluding that the extravagant and unconscionable use made by Brahmans of their doctrine of divine embodiment is quite enough to account for the creation of the greater number of personal gods actually worshipped without drawing upon any other source of polytheism. Nor are they always content with posthumous identification of a remarkable man as a god. They still occasionally refuse even to admit that the dissolution of the first mortal body was a sign that the god had departed from among them; and they employ that astonishing device, so notorious in India, of a perpetual succession of incarnations. At least two persons have been living within the last few years in western and central India who are asserted to be the tenements or vessels which the deity, who originally manifested himself in some wonderful personage, has now chosen for his abode on earth; and one native official well known in the Bombay Presidency, in whom the signs of divinity had been detected, was so harassed by an incessant following of devout folk that he became unable to do his business. This is, however, an inordinate use of the mystery. Its main employment is to keep up the prestige and privileges of the classical deities by declaring all wonderful and famous personages to be embodiments of them; and thus have many great prophets and moral teachers been identified and absorbed, except those who actually attacked Brahmanism. One of the most numerous sects in Berar, and throughout the Dekhan, is that of the *Lingàyets;* they wear constantly the Linga, as Siva's emblem, and their founder was one *Chamba Basàpa*, evidently a great man in his day, who preached high morality, though probably tinged with mysticism. He is now commonly recognised to have been an incarnation of Siva, and his followers are merely a peculiar section of Siva-worshippers. The other leading sect among the trading classes of the Dekhan is that of the Jains, who adore certain deified saints that have traversed a series of metempsychoses. But the Jains deny the Vedas, and are distinctly, though not exclusively, heretical; so their saints have never been exalted or absorbed into the Hindu Pantheon.

Then we have in Berar an anomalous sect, called the *Mànbhaus*, part of whom are laymen, and the rest live by strict rule as wandering friars and nuns clothed in black. Their teaching is quite anti-Brahmanical, and the consequence is that their founder, one Krishna, is declared by the orthodox to have been a Brahman who disgraced himself by terrible *mésalliance*, not by any means an incarnation of the god Krishna, as his more enthusiastic and less exclusive votaries say. The real Krishna must have been a person of some mark; one of those true religious reformers who have arisen from time to time in India out of the humblest classes, and have caused great spiritualistic revivals.[1] Men of this temperament have constantly come forth in India, who, by their active intellectual originality, joined to a spiritual kind of life, have stirred up great movements and aspirations in Hinduism, and have founded sects that endure to this day; but it has almost invariably happened that the later followers of such a teacher have undone his work of moral reform. They have fallen back upon evidences of miraculous birth, upon signs and wonders, and a superhuman translation from the world; so that gradually the founder's history becomes prodigious and extra-natural, until his real doctrines shrink into mystical secrets known only to the initiated disciples, while the vulgar turn the iconoclast into a new idol.

But this line of disquisition would bring us out upon that other vast field of religious ideas in India which have for

[1] Compare the life and doctrines of Ràm Dàss, the tanner; Dàdu, cotton-cleaner; Kabir, Mahomedan weaver; Tuka Ram, farmer; Nàm Deo, tailor.

their base, not religion, but morality, and for their object, not propitiation of the unseen powers, but an ethical reformation. Upon that ground it is not possible here to enter, as in this essay I am only attempting to draw an outline of the external popular superstitions, and hazarding some conjectures as to the way in which this prodigious panorama of divine things and persons, the outward and visible manifestations of pantheism, has been constructed. Nowhere but in India can we now survey with our eyes an indigenous polytheism in full growth, flourishing like a secular green bay-tree among a people of ancient culture; and the spectacle may be thought to present many interesting features and analogies. It would seem as if the old order had been continually, though slowly, changing, giving place to new—as if the manifold deities from below had always been pressing upon the earlier divinities, until, like Saturn and Hyperion, they were more or less superseded. The classic personifications of the elements, and of their grand operations, are not now much in vogue as gods of the people. Even the Supreme Triad of Hindu allegory, which represent the almighty powers of creation, preservation, and destruction, have long ceased to preside actively over any such corresponding distribution of functions. The direct or primary worship of these three divinities, especially of Brahma, the Creator (whose occupation has, obviously, more or less gone), is comparatively rare; and if it be true that in these outlying districts the original names have gone mostly out of ritual use, the reason may be that the original types have been melted down and divided piecemeal among a variety of emanations and embodiments, and that the highest offices of universal administration have thus been put into commission. Perhaps the gods who have suffered least from the wear and tear during centuries of religious caprice, and who have longest held their ancient forms and places in the front rank of popular imagination, are the gods of heroic legend. The reason may be that the original kings and warriors out of whom these divinities have developed were especially powerful and famous in their time, and therefore cast a broader and stronger personal shadow upon tradition than the ordinary saint, prophet, or anchorite. They have also this peculiar advantage—that poetry has, of course, been a powerful agent in India (as in ancient Europe) for developing heroes into demi-gods, for spreading the fame of their deeds as gods, and for defining their attributes.

But although polytheism still prevails and multiplies throughout the land, and although the Brahmanic system, deep-rooted and wide-spreading, shows no signs of vital decay, one may nevertheless venture to anticipate that the end of simple paganism is not far distant in India. The beliefs of the multitude are the reflections of their social and political history through many generations. Now that the Hindus have been rescued by the English out of a chronic state of anarchy, insecurity, lawlessness, and precarious exposure to the caprice of despots, they will surely introduce, at least, some ideas of rule, organised purpose, and moral law, into their popular conceptions of the ways of their gods towards men. It seems certain, at any rate, that wider experience, nearer and more frequent intercourse with the outer world, and the general education of modern life, must soon raise even the masses above the mental level that can credit contemporary miracles and incarnations, however they may still hold by the prodigies of elder tradition. And this will be enough to sever the tap-root of a religion which now, like the banyan-tree which it venerates, strikes fresh root from every branch, discovers a new god under every mystery and wonder. Moreover, the evidences of an incipient turning-away from gross idolatry and a religion of the senses are already to be seen high and low, in the popularity among the wandering aboriginal tribes of certain spiritual teachers, in the spread among the middle classes of certain mystical

opinions, and of much floating scepticism, and in the endeavours of the higher intellectualists to found upon their ancient scripture a reformed Hinduism, with spiritual worship and a system of enlightened morality.

II

ON THE ORIGIN OF DIVINE MYTHS IN INDIA

Grote's conclusion, in the "History of Greece," regarding myths—Remarks upon his argument—Comparative observation of heroic and religious myths of India may throw some light on the general subject of growth of myths—Leading authorities on mythology ascribe myths too largely to personifications of natural phenomena—Suggestion that the theory of Euhemerus has been too entirely condemned, and that in India the deification of humanity is one main source of divine legends and of theogonies—The process of the generation and development of gods can be witnessed in India—Mythology develops into polytheism out of the mystery of death, out of wonder at the deeds, sufferings, and saintly character of remarkable men—The Heaven thus created is a reflection of the earth below, and religion rests upon the analogy of Nature—Spiritual ascetics found new sects or are absorbed into materialistic divinities—General conclusion as to the multifarious origins and diverse growth of the deities, their legends, and attributes.

GROTE, in the first volume of his History of Greece, discusses in full the nature of myths, and he determines that the mythical narrative of Europe is a special product of the imagination and feeling, radically distinct both from history and philosophy. He refuses altogether to treat the myths as containing any evidence upon matters of fact. He does not deny, indeed he affirms, that myths may often embody real facts and the names of real persons; but his position is, that we have no test whereby to distinguish fact from fiction in any particular myth of which corroborative evidence is not forthcoming, so that we must treat all as "matter appropriate only for subjective history."

Looking to the arguments used in support of this sentence on the myths, one may question whether the historian has not been too exacting in his demands for corroboration, and too peremptory in discarding all reliance upon internal evidence and analogies, when he thus condemns indiscriminately all stories which are not specifically propped up by external proofs. For Grote maintains that a narrative of credible incidents raises of itself no more presumption (in default of positive testimony) that the incidents occurred than does a composition of Defoe: he says that it is plausible fiction and nothing more.[1] He considers even the highest measure of intrinsic probability to be of itself insufficient to justify one's believing that any of the facts related really occurred; it can only make one admit that they may perhaps have occurred. An assertion may be made, he observes, of a thing entirely probable, which yet no one need credit, as if a man should assert that rain fell in Massachusetts on the day of the battle of Platæa. Here Grote seems to be a little hard on the myths. For, first, it is very difficult to distinguish between plausible fiction (of the kind, for example, to which Defoe's "History of the Plague" belongs) and genuine history in dealing with the records come down from ancient and uncritical ages, since extrinsic evidence thus preserved and transmitted is as likely to be plausible fiction as any other credible narrative, and we have very scanty means of actually sifting or testing any evidence whatever as to particular events or persons. If we may only receive as credible those ancient narratives which could not possibly turn out to be very plausible fiction, we shall be hard pushed for the trustworthy authentication of much early history, religious and secular. Secondly, the example of the supposed assertion as to simultaneous rainfall at Platæa and in Massachusetts is hardly

[1] "History of Greece," chap. xvi., p. 413, small edition.

fair. A man's assertion of an isolated fact of which he could not possibly have any positive knowledge, either directly or by hearsay, is a very different thing from affirming credible facts which might reasonably, and according to the known habits of the people who relate the facts, have been handed down by tradition from the persons who witnessed them to those who related them. And, lastly, I venture to think that Grote's purely sceptical attitude ignores a great deal of collateral evidence in favour of myths being ordinarily formed round a nucleus of facts, any other formation being exceptional. At any rate, if one may rely upon comparative observation of the growth of myths in various parts of a country in which they spring up like mushrooms, a very great number of the myths of Indian polytheism and hero-worship have grown straight up from a fact at their roots.

However, Grote did not deny that myths, taken in a mass, contain real matter of fact; he only said that in any particular myth you cannot distinguish fact from fiction, so he rejects them all as useless for the purpose of history. He would probably have admitted Defoe's "History of the Plague" to be some kind of evidence that a plague did break out somewhere at some time; he would not have attempted to explain the whole story as some travesty of early imaginations. Whereas some of the comparative mythologists would remove all foundation in fact whatsoever from the figures and incidents of early Aryan myths, especially of divine myths. The whole province of myths has been occupied and annexed under the standard of philology. And of all myths the divine myth is universally taken to be most demonstratively a baseless fabric, to be founded on a class of facts utterly different from those which it purports to relate. The highest authorities in comparative mythology appear to trace almost the whole of this class of figures and narratives into personifications of the worship of inanimate Nature. Professor Max Müller, in his essay on "Comparative Mythology," wrote:[1]—

> "If we want to know whither the human mind, though endowed with the natural consciousness of a divine power, is driven necessarily and inevitably by the irresistible force of language as applied to supernatural and abstract ideas, we must read the Veda; *and if we want to tell the Hindus what they are worshipping—mere names of natural phenomena, gradually obscured, personified, and deified*—we must make them read the Veda. It was a mistake of the early Fathers to treat the heathen gods as demons or evil spirits, and we must take care not to commit the same error with regard to the Hindu gods. *Their gods have no more right to any substantive existence than Eos or Hemera, than Nyx or Apatê.* They are masks without an actor—the creation of man, not his creators; they are *nomina*, not *numina*—names without being, not beings without names."

In regard to the heroic myth Mr. Cox receives, in another essay on the "Manual of Mythology," the very lenient warning that we ought to be prepared, even in the legends of Hercules or Theseus, "to find some grains of local history, on which the sharpest tools of comparative mythology must bend or break." "It does not always follow," Professor Max Müller observes, "that heroes of old who performed what may be called solar myths are therefore nothing but myths." Nevertheless, "the general agreement which has of late years been arrived at by most students of mythology, that all mythological explanations must rest on a sound etymological basis,"[2] has been so entirely accepted, and made so comprehensive by writers of the books on the subject which are most widely read, that it seems likely to obliterate all other explanations from the popular mind. This is especially the case as to divine myths, which contain so much of a kind obviously incredible that people are the easier convinced that all these stories are imaginary from first to last, and the figures in them mere phantoms of sun and mist. Even Grote, who did not commit himself to the theory of solar

[1] "Chips from a German Workshop": Article—"Comparative Mythology." (*Italics mine.*)

[2] *Ibid.*

myths, uses the fact of the existence of divine myths as undeniable proof that myths need have no basis in fact, but may be pure creations of the mythopœic faculty. For, at any rate, he argues (in opposition to those who affirmed the mythopœic faculty to be never creative), the divine legend is often purely imaginative, not merely in Greece, but in other countries also. These legends, he considers, derive their origin "not from special facts misreported and exaggerated, but from pious feelings pervading the society, and translated into narrative by forward and imaginative minds . . . legends in which the generating sentiment is conspicuously discernible, *providing its own matter as well as its own form.*"[1] "To suppose," Grote adds in a note to another passage, "that these religious legends are mere exaggerations of some basis of actual fact—that the gods of polytheism were merely divinised men, with qualities distorted or feigned —would be to embrace in substance the theory of Euhemerus."[2] Now, to embrace Euhemerism is also an unpardonable heresy against comparative mythology.

But while it would be undoubtedly a grievous error to embrace the theory of Euhemerus as a key to all mythologies, on the other hand I venture to suggest that it cannot be left out altogether as an exploded notion "astonishing in writers who have made themselves in any degree acquainted with the results of comparative grammar."[3] If one may be permitted to offer an opinion formed upon some extensive observation of the working of the mythopœic faculty in India—perhaps the only ancient country which still keeps alive a true polytheism of the first order—I should say that in constructing the science of religion we might do worse than make room for the theory of Euhemerus. In the details of his treatment of the myths, his method of rejecting all that was to his mind impossible or incredible, and piecing together out of the residuum a plausible version of the story, seems indefensible. But Euhemerus is said to have been an Asiatic traveller; and if we may judge from what goes on before our eyes in Asia now, there is a great deal to say for his main theory which "represented both gods and heroes as having been mere earth-born men, though superior to the ordinary level in respect of force and capacity, and deified or heroified after death as a recompense for services or striking exploits." Indeed, this quotation from Grote describes very nearly the conclusions that would be drawn from looking narrowly at the process of the generation of gods in India at the present day; and if there be ground for supposing that this process has been going on more or less in India for thousands of years, the effect is worth considering. It is probable that the loose, presumptuous way in which Euhemerus applied his method has brought his theory into unmerited disrepute, and has thus thrown it too much into the background now-a-days. His mistake lay in treating his theory as a master-key which would disclose the inside of all mythologies; though this is a mistake rarely avoided by any one with a theory on the same subject, for the latest writers appear very intolerant of any rival theory in any corner of the same field, and are not satisfied until they have hunted it clear off the ground, so that even the best and soundest of modern theories suffer in this way by overstraining.

For example, this theory of Euhemerus is, I believe, rejected altogether by the more thorough-going comparative mythologists. The view maintained in the "Mythology of Aryan Nations" as to the origin and course of divine myths, stated briefly, appears to be that primitive Aryans began with personifying the great processes of Nature, went on to deify in the image of man the impersonated phenomena, and to distribute their attributes; then made the gods actors in legends which accepted in real earnest,

[1] "History of Greece," chap. xvi.
[2] *Ibid.*, chap. xvi., note to p. 394.
[3] "Mythology of the Aryan Nations," p. 171.

and converted into earthly incidents such metaphors as of light striving with darkness, and the like; and, finally, settled their full-blown gods and demi-gods down upon earth with local habitations, names, and human biographies. Now the Euhemeristic theory would, speaking roughly, invert this order of development and begin at the other end, tracing the local hero of real life through different stages up to the great deity who wields the forces of Nature. And the main objection to either system seems to be that each insists upon an exclusive monopoly of the whole province of myths, leaving no room for the other; that because it does explain a part of mythology it has been applied to the whole; that each system endeavours to explain not only mythology in one phase or at one period, but the whole general course of its evolution into actual polytheism. Upon some processes in the formation of belief philology has thrown a flood of light; nevertheless, the high authorities who appear to assign to the whole family of divine Aryan myths their birthplace in the personifications of inanimate Nature may be unaware of the quantity and weight of evidence that an Euhemerist could even in these days produce on his side. They seem to exclude too absolutely from their survey of the main-springs of mythology and religion that copious and deep-flowing foundation of belief, the direct deification of humanity; the fact that men are incessantly converting other men into gods, or embodiments of gods, or emanations from the Divine Spirit, all over Asia, and that out of the deified man is visibly spun the whole myth, which envelops him as a silk-worm in its cocoon. This very remarkable operation of human credulity is little mentioned by mythologists, and yet to omit careful account of it, or to treat it as merely the last stage of a personified Nature worship, appears to involve risk of a wide misunderstanding of the whole birth and growth of primitive ideas. Moreover, this miscalculation at the starting-point would be likely to lead us astray further on, so that we might miss the structural connection between early incoherent forms of religion and those which are later and more concentrated. It should be remembered that all the great Asiatic religions which have lifted the world up out of polytheism derive straight from remarkable personages; that the authentic history of all such personages has invariably become surrounded by every kind of subsequent legend, and discoloured by the refracting lights of popular imagination, whereby the sifting-out of the real facts has become very difficult. It is also to be borne in mind that there prevails a constant tendency to question and explain away the historic humanity and substantial individuality of persons recognised as being of divine character or origin. Sakya Muni, the founder of Buddhism, has been disguised by the Brahmans as a great Avatár, or embodiment of Vishnu; the younger Burnouf actually interprets Christianity, on etymologic grounds, to be a Fire worship; Kápila, the reputed founder of the Sankhya philosophy among the Hindus, is affirmed by learned Hindu commentators to have been an incarnation of *Agni*, because one of the meanings of his name is Fire: and the speculations of early Docetism are well known.

Before, therefore, we undertake to tell the Hindu what he is worshipping, and to assure him that his gods are mere names of natural phenomena, I think we are bound to consider them in the actual field of observation, how they grow. We shall at least find a good deal of evidence to be collected in favour of Euhemerism in India itself. For there it is certain that the popular polytheism of the present day is constantly growing up and developing out of the worship of holy or famous men who have actually existed. The universal and incessant practice throughout India (and one may say throughout Eastern Asia) of deifying remarkable personages, will account for the origin of almost all divine anthropomorphic narratives, and for many of the

gods now in vogue, and it certainly seems to warrant us in allowing for a much larger proportion of authentic fact than is usually admitted in compounding a theory as to their beginning and evolution. In a former chapter some attempt was made to describe the process of turning men into divinities, by which saints and heroes are gradually promoted until they reach the highest and mistiest summits of godship. And subsequent enlargement of observation in different provinces of India has created a deep impression that in Europe there is now no adequate conception of the extent to which, and the force with which, this intense and habitual working of the primitive mind toward deification must have affected the beginning of religions. In this stage of belief the people construct for themselves Jacob's ladders between earth and heaven; the men are seen ascending until they become gods; they then descend again as embodiments of the divinities; insomuch that it may be almost doubted whether any god, except the Vedic divinities and other obvious Nature gods, comes down the ladder who had not originally gone up as a man, and an authentic man. The ascent of the elder Hindu deities is shrouded in the haze of past times; but several of the most eminent (Siva and Krishna for instance) are still vulgarly reported to have been men; and there are instances in plenty of men who have actually started up the ladder by consent and testimony of the whole neighbourhood, and have reappeared as acknowledged divinities. To quote examples would be only to give a list of provincial deities, more or less obscure; but one might safely say that a great number of verifiable men are now worshipped as gods in various parts of India, and the number is constantly added to. The Indians worship everything created, but above all things men and women; and any one can notice that nothing impresses the primitive or the uncultivated mind like human personality or character. Nature worship itself, in its most striking form, is only maintained among the crowd by anthropomorphism, while the actuality and sympathetic attraction of a real known person gives him the immense advantage of local popularity. And this intense impression left by human personality is seen to be stronger as scrutiny descends into the lower stages of superstition. The aboriginal tribes are completely under its dominion; they cannot shake it off at all, and are haunted by their incapacity to get rid of powerful masters in life or death. If they attribute storms or sunsets to a sort of personified agency, they are sure to give it the name and legend of some real man whom they or their fathers have known. The process of Brahmanising which these tribes are undergoing in India of course greatly increases the supply of gods from the Euhemeristic source; for, as these poor non-Aryans, innocent of allegory, do actually worship men, so the homely jungle hero comes eventually to get brevet rank among regular divinities, whenever his tribe is promoted into Hinduism.

The upper class of Brahmans are prone to deny the existence of this process, and to prefer that the proselytising which goes on should be understood as involuntary on their part and merely superficial; they would be willing to keep their Olympus classic, and above the heads of these low-born intruders. But the local Brahman has to live, and is not troubled by any such fine scruples, so he initiates the rude Gond and Mina (non-Aryans of the jungle) as fast as they come to him for spiritual advice, sets them up with a few decent caste prejudices, and gives to their rough, unfinished superstitions some Brahmanic shape and varnish. This is vexatious to the refined Vedantist of the towns, but the same thing goes on everywhere; for a lofty and refined orthodoxy will not attract ignorant outsiders, nor will it keep the mass of a people within a common outline of belief. And so the high and mighty deities of Brahmanism would never draw upward the peasant

and the woodlander if he were not invited to bring with him his fetich, his local hero or sage, his were-wolf and his vampires, all to be dressed up and interpreted into orthodox emanations. In one part of Rajputána the Minas (an aboriginal tribe) used to worship the pig. When they took a turn toward Islam, they changed their pig into a Saint called Father Adam, and worshipped him as such; when the Brahmans got a turn at them, the pig became identified as the famous Boar Avatár of Vishnu, whose name is Varâha.[1]

While these things are going on before one's eyes, insomuch that any striking personage appears tolerably sure of divine honours and a miraculous biography after death, it is difficult not to allot the first place among the different methods of manufacturing gods to this process. Without doubt the Vedic deities, and a good many others which prevail in India, have been produced by finer and more intelligent handicraft; but for a rough propitiatory worship, adapted to everyday popular needs and uses, the quantity and quality of the deified men appear to satisfy a large demand, and to give them an immense circulation. It should be remarked, however, that the description of Hinduism given in this chapter applies throughout to the worship of the mass of the population of India, which is mainly rural; and that the difference between the worship of the country and of the towns is very considerable whenever polytheism extends over a wide area, and is not under the influence of cities as orthodox centres. Probably some such distinction as is implied by the word pagan has always existed to some degree in India.

In short, though no one would deny the strong influence of Nature worship upon primitive religions, yet the part played by inanimate phenomena must not be overrated. Early superstitions derive much from the heavens above, from the sky, the storms, the seasons, and from light and darkness. The great Nature gods still reign in India, if they do not govern, and their influence is felt over a wide range of legend and liturgy. But all the vitality and the concrete impressive figures which stand forth in the front rank of a popular Asiatic religion appear to come direct out of humanity below, out of the earth, as the scene of the exploits, sufferings, and passions of mankind, which are, above all things, of absorbing interest to man. That the two sources of mythology meet, and are blended, there can be no doubt; the Nature god sometimes condenses into a man, and is precipitated upon earth; the hero or saint often refines and evaporates into a deity up in the skies. And thus it may, perhaps, be said that a polytheistic religion forms itself after the manner of a waterspout, which to the looker-on appears to be the dipping down of the clouds from the sky, and the uprising of the waters which cover the earth, whereby is created a continuous column which may seem to lead up from earth to heaven, or down from heaven to earth, according to the fancy of the wondering spectator. The bowing down of the clouds toward the earth may illustrate the human personification of the great mysteries of the elements of the inanimate forces as seen in the changes of the sky; the uplifting of the sea water toward heaven above is the elevation to divinity of the incidents of human life, far-sounding actions, wonderful adventures, pathetic striving, and the like. Where the waters of the earth end, and those of the sky begin, one can tell precisely neither in the water-spout nor in the religion, after it has formed; the precise point of contact disappears, and one can only guess by watching the process of formation upon other occasions. But whereas many persons appear to hold that this column which holds up the heaven of a primitive polytheism is almost entirely let down from the sky, the lesson of Indian

[1] Latin Verres (?) Compare Horace III. 22: "*Verris* obliquum meditantis ictum." In French *verrat*.

observation is, that it rises much more directly from the earth, that man is mainly the base as well as the capital.

That the theory of Euhemerus applies more extensively to modern Asiatic polytheism than it did to the polytheism of ancient Europe may well be true. It may be that Nature worship, conscious or unconscious, prevails more largely in one stage than in another of popular religion, and that the Indians have passed out of that stage; that the old personifications have been superseded, and have retired into the background. Indeed, there is such a crush and jumble of new gods constantly pushing themselves forward up the Jacob's ladder in India that, without fresh blood, no old-established deity could long maintain predominance. New and improved miraculous machinery is constantly introduced, and the complex and changing nature of human wants and grievances requires a popular god to keep abreast with the times. Such a thing, for instance, as vaccination needs in these days to be accounted for; and the question is, whether such new wonders are to be accepted and absorbed or denounced. Fresh blood may be obtained by the simple expedient of a new embodiment of the old-fashioned divinity if the competitor is a new and remarkable personage, or by a new attribute if it is a physical discovery. In this manner the elder gods may well have been driven back into the sky by the swarm of earth-born deifications. But the leading gods of ancient Greece and Rome seem to have always been more obvious personifications of inanimate Nature than has for many centuries been the case in the popular liturgy of India. Cox's theory of the evolution of polytheism by the grouping of physical phenomena into a personage (which is in effect identical with the theory of the evolution of all divine myths from Nature worship) appears mainly drawn from classic polytheism, wherein the great heads of natural departments were universally known and adored, more or less consciously. These are the deities with which the Euhemerism has nothing to do, and which Euhemerus should not have tried to explain away into men, for he did not understand their constitution, and made altogether a wrong diagnosis. As to these, so far as one can understand their position in India, it would appear that the departmental god, immediate or derived, occupies no very forward place in modern Brahmanic polytheism. Without doubt the Vedic personifications are still held in high reverence, and the system agrees with classic polytheism in deifying a few of the more important vital functions, which are still represented by unmistakable concrete symbolism, as they were among the pagan nations of antiquity. In the *Civitas Dei* of St. Augustine there are passages describing the lower and more sensual worship and customs, prevalent among the people of his day, which correspond exactly with those now practised in India.[1] And natural phenomena are still largely worshipped in concrete, as the Sun or Fire.

We do not find in India, however, such delicate personifications as Aphrodite and Lucina, and this difference, so far as it exists between the constitution of Asiatic and of classic polytheism, may perhaps be explained by saying that the more imaginative and incomparably more æsthetic Greek had reached a later stage of polytheism, in which people are satisfied with personifying movements of Nature, that his symmetrical and poetic taste led him to group the attributes of the sea, for instance, artistically under one name, and actually to adore his beautiful creation. Whereas the Hindu, grotesque and irregular in his conceptions, more gross in his sensuous ideas, but at the same time more profoundly spiritual, more oppressed by the mystery of life and death, requires something closer to human sympathies for his worship.

[1] Compare, for example, lib. vi. cap. ix. 24, D.C.D.

Between a bad climate, and worse governments, he has usually had a hard and precarious lot upon earth; he would demur from his own experience to the sentiment that kings and priests can make or cure but a small portion of the ills which man endures; on the contrary, he would assert the exact contrary, taking the priests to be agents of the gods, and taking, as he does, many of the gods as representing merely another phase of the powerful men who do what they choose with him on earth. These personages, whether in the visible or invisible world, are a great burden to his wearisful existence, and are the chief causes of his anxiety to escape from it; he by no means looks forward to meeting them in some future world, and singing their praise; what the Hindu desires is to escape from them altogether, and to obtain either absorption or extinction. He canonises or deifies his distinguished men, not always by way of distributing orders of merit or titles for past services, but often because he really thinks they were, and are, the embodiments of power, and could still do him a mischief. And the extraordinary difficulty which the Hindu finds in conceiving a way of escape out of his own personal existence is only one proof of the very strong impression made upon him by individual personality and character. He will not realise the dismissal to shades below of a hero, nor will he leave him drinking nectar with a purple mouth up above, only to reappear when called in to solve knots worthy of a god. His favourite doctrines of transmigration and incarnation bring the individual constantly back upon earth in the flesh. Thus he constantly turns his men into gods, and his gods back into men; he discovers a living man in whom the god actually resides, or he builds a temple to a god with an authentic human biography, in either case with equal confidence. All this may rest upon pantheism, or the belief that the primal energy is the same everywhere, in a storm, a cow, a man, or a god. But it none the less follows that this divine energy is most directly concerned with humanity when it is run into the mould of a human creature. Borgias and Catilines are, in India, more important and impressive representatives of heaven's design than even storms and earthquakes; and, therefore, for one personification of storms and earthquakes, the Hindu deifies a hundred Borgias, or successful Catilines. These considerations may be allowed to support an argument that the working divinities of Hinduism are much more largely supplied by the deification of authentic men than may ever have been the case in classic Europe, and consequently that the theory of Euhemerus affords a good explanation of the origin of a great part of Asiatic polytheism. It may at any rate be affirmed that a large majority of the minor deities are magnified non-natural men, without any defined speciality, who subsist and flourish by absorbing, and taking credit for, not the powers of Nature, but the devout or heroic exploits of men.[1]

It is worth remarking that Buckle, in comparing the Hindu and Greek religions, lays stress upon a view of their respective characteristics which is almost exactly contrary to that which has here been suggested. He is illustrating the influence of physical laws on religion; and in this place his errors on matters of fact are so great as to inspire grave mistrust of the process of searching a library for facts to suit a comprehensive theory. "According to the principles already laid down," says Buckle, the deification of mortals "could not be expected in a tropical civilisation, where the aspects of Nature filled man with a constant sense

[1] They also draw largely upon the dangerous characteristics of animals; but this is a branch of the subject which is not here touched, though here also comparative mythology seems to have made an arbitrary and somewhat unjustifiable annexation of the whole province. To those who live in a country where the people are convinced that wicked people and witches constantly take the form of wild beasts, the explanations of Lykanthropy by a confusion between Leukos and Lukos seems superfluous and very far fetched.

of his own incapacity. It is, therefore, natural that it should form no part of the ancient Indian religion"; and he then quotes Colebrooke, who said that the worship of deified men is no part of the Vedic system, as if the remark applied to Indian religion generally; while he goes on to point out that in Greece the deification of mortals was a recognised part of the national religion at a very early period. But what Colebrooke really said was, that the worship of deified heroes is a later phase not to be found in the Vedas, though the heroes themselves, not yet deified, are therein mentioned occasionally. Buckle had evidently never heard of the ancient and still flourishing Jaina community, whose external worship is entirely paid to divinised saints; and when we consider that the deification of men is universally characteristic of the cults of all the wild non-Aryan tribes in India, we see how completely Buckle's theory, that this deification implies a superior respect for human powers, breaks down under accurate observation. The bloodiest and most degrading superstition in all India, that of the Khonds, is saturated with the idea that men become gods, and the worship of the dead, which is embryonic polytheism, is an almost universal characteristic of the earliest superstitions in all countries.

And thus, to resume the course of our subject, mythology develops into polytheism very largely out of the primitive habit of astonishment at the deeds and sufferings of real men, out of the tragedy of life, the mystery of death, and the universal attraction exercised over man by superior men. The elemental personifications exist, but they retain no monopoly of attributes, for a large proportion of every wonderful event or appearance is claimed for the local hero; whether it be storm, earthquake, or cholera, it is just as likely to be attributed to some notorious person, living or just dead, as to an established god, or to one of the primal deities who are constantly reappearing in the Avatárs, or embodiments of famous gods or heroes. Later on in the apotheosis come the stories of monstrous and fantastic miracles, which are mainly nothing more than fictions invented for advertising a deity and attracting attention, like a huge pictorial programme of a circus stuck up in a country village. These amazing excrescences create no proper prejudice at all against the actuality of their hero, for no hero ever appeared in Asia who was not at once daubed over with a thick coating of the marvellous, which may be in some cases, however, mere conventional exaggeration, mainly intended to amuse and attract. No one is seriously taken in by the magnificent coloured painting of the circus performer driving twenty horses abreast; it only means that any one who goes within the booth will find that something rather novel and curious is really performed. And the end of this deification is that a magnified, non-natural man is deposited in Olympus with a large credit to his account for whatever has been latterly going on in his neighbourhood upon earth, and an accumulated capital stock of miracles which are sometimes pure delusions, but often facts grievously distorted. Then, in latter days, when the atmosphere of belief has changed, and when public opinion is become clarified on such matters, people are astounded at finding a deity with such a history quietly seated up aloft, and they try to evaporate him, or to explain him away with all possible ingenuity. Hence a variety of metaphors and mystifications employed particularly by the more cultivated and intellectual polytheists; but it is very rare to find any one of the superior classes who will acknowledge that the god is simply the natural outgrowth of the deifying process going on around them. They will say of a man that he is the embodiment of a god: they encourage the people to turn men into gods, and they are reluctant to allow that their gods are men. The moralists are puzzled by the apparent want of moral purpose or ethical decency about the god, forgetting that they who

fashioned him went upon the analogy of their own experience, and of the hourly processes of Nature, and that the god was never intended to be a model, or a reforming ruler and teacher of mankind, only a distorted image of some passages in human existence. And, lastly, in order to get rid of the intense anthropomorphism of polytheism, philosophers expound that it is necessary to the laws and processes of the human mind, that it is absolutely indispensable in order to make certain transcendental ideas conceivable to the faculties. But, in fact, man usually obtains the human figures for his heaven by a very much more material operation, by taking rough casts, as one might say, of famous personages in the flesh, and subsequently modelling and re-modelling the plastic shape to suit his fancy or his moral sense. Of course it does not logically follow that because every real hero and saint is divinised, therefore every divine personage was once a real hero or saint, and the point contended for in this chapter is only that comparative observation establishes a strong presumption in favour of some such inference, where no other explanation is manifest.

From this point of view, therefore, the professors of the science of religion who maintain that divine mythology was originally formed in the sky out of Nature worship, where it gradually condensed and was precipitated in the shapes of polytheism, may be perhaps said to have omitted due attention to the antecedent process of evaporation upward. The cloud-land is first filled by emanations from the earth. And, from a different standpoint of observation, the metaphor suggested by this constant transmutation of human forms into divine images, and by their refraction again upon the sight of men wondering, is that of a mirage. In countries and climates where, as in India, the phantastic phantasmagoria of divine shapes or scenes in the heavens above answers very closely to what is actually going on, or supposed to be going on, among men upon earth below, the phenomenon of deification is easily explained and understood. One watches the reflected forms take shape and colour, and fade as the sun grows strong enough to dispel the intellectual mist out of which they are produced. In such circumstances it is impossible not to suspect the fallacy of drawing an argument in favour of the credibility of a divine narrative from its natural analogy with the known order of things in the world, and of demonstrating that because strange and unaccountable things are known to occur upon earth, therefore any incident not more strange and unaccountable, reported as from heaven, is credible. This is to affirm that the reflection is as substantial as the thing reflected. The peculiarity of the religious mirage is, that it remains long after the scenes upon earth which it caught up have passed away: for a primitive belief retained among cultivated people is like the survival in the sky of a mirage long after the landscape which it reflected, with the early light and the hazy atmosphere which transmitted it, have changed. If this survival were physically possible, then, since the appearance still remaining in the sky would have no longer even a fanciful or refracted resemblance to things among the people on earth, they would wonder how it came there; the phenomenon would appear mysterious and inexplicable, mystic and symbolical, as a divine myth appears to later generations. Whereas those who have seen a religious mirage in its earlier stages perceive that the human forms visible in the heavens are mostly the great shadows cast by real personages who stood out from among the primitive generations of men upon earth. They are fantastic *silhouettes*, and they fade away as the mists clear; but they almost certainly reflect and preserve in outline an original figure somewhere once existent upon earth though they may be no nearer the scale of humanity than the spectres of the Brocken.

For the purposes of the science of religion, and as a study of further de-

velopments, it is worth while observing how the spiritualists of India, the preachers of pure morals and of subjective creeds, are hampered and entangled by this gross materialism of the people. No spiritual teacher of mark can evade being reckoned a god (or a visible embodiment of divine power) by the outer ring of his disciples, and an atheist or blasphemer by his enemies; he may disown and denounce, but the surrounding atmosphere is too strong for him. When the lower class of priests discover that in his secret teaching he is against them, they are apt to invent vindictive and scandalous accounts of his birth and social conduct. They may excommunicate him, and prudently, for in all countries the spiritualist is impelled to attack, as empty formalities injurious to religious brotherhood and equality, those caste rules and prejudices about physical purity or impurity which are so inveterate in all early theologies. And if the new sect openly defies caste, it will be persecuted. The common people, on the other hand, amid much vague awe of the professional Brahman, never allow him a monopoly of their religious custom; nor does the Brahman himself set up as agent for the only genuine repertory of divinities, or declare all others to be spurious. Uniformity and consistency in creeds are inventions of the logical and thorough-going European mind; and though religion is the only general question which really interests the Asiatic people, yet they have never organised either their ideas or their institutions up to that point of precision and legality which naturally breeds active intolerance. To the mass of Hindus it is quite simple that they shall indulge their fancy in following after any new deity or saint who is likely to do them a good turn, without troubling themselves whether this latest dispensation is in accordance or collision with their regular everyday ritual. So they insist on recognising the spiritualist as a fresh manifestation of Power, and they worship him accordingly. This does not much offend orthodoxy, which has no great objection to adding to the number of deities; but the esoteric doctrines, which probably drown all priesthoods and gods together in the depths of some mystic revelation, are much more likely to get their authors into trouble. Hence arise the secret fraternities, the symbols and masonic signs, by which nearly every spiritual sect intercommunicates. These things are used to save the teacher from his friends as well as from his enemies; the melancholy ascetic may be seen sitting and enduring the adoration of the crowd; he does not encourage them, but he does not much attempt to undeceive them. His secret, his way of life, his glimpse behind the curtain before which all this illusive stage play of the visible world goes on, his short cut out of the circle of miserable existences, these things he imparts to those disciples whom he selects out of the herd, and whom he sends abroad to distribute the news. When he dies he is canonised, and he may fall into the grip of the Brahmans after all, and be turned into an embodiment of a god, but his society may also survive and spread on its spiritual basis. Unluckily, secret societies founded on the purest principles are unsafe institutions in all ages. They are, of course, regarded suspiciously by every government, and with very good reason; for their movements in Asia are sure to grow into political agitation whenever they acquire any impetus. And in India there is such a perceptible tendency of spiritual liberalism to degenerate into license—there is so much evidence of the liability of the purest mysticism to be interpreted by way of orgies among weaker brethren—that one may guess scandalous stories about private gatherings of the initiated to have been not altogether without foundation in any age or country.

Whether a spiritual ascetic shall succeed in founding a sect with inner lights, or only a fresh group of votaries which adore him as a peculiar manifestation of divinity, seems to depend much upon all kinds of chance. Sometimes both con-

ceptions of him survive, and thus we get that duplex formation so common in Eastern religions—the esoteric doctrine and the esoteric cult. There is one widely spread sect in India (though not many English know it) which outwardly worships Krishna, an incarnation of Vishnu, and sets up his image in the house; but their real point of adoration is an obscure enthusiast who founded the sect not very long ago, and who is now in the semi-miraculous stage. By the outer-disciples he is certainly held to be himself an embodiment of Vishnu; but, so far as can be made out, the initiated still know him to have been a spiritualist who scorned gods and Brahmans. But, as time goes on, these two branches out of one stock, the worship of a divinity and the inner revelation, become twisted up together, so that the reputed miracles are used to authenticate the spiritual message, and the spiritual message is put forward as an adequate motive to explain the miracles. Then, of course, the message itself is subjected to incessant changes and enlargements; for, being always at its first delivery a very simple message contained in a few deep, abstruse sayings, it is very soon required to explain everything in this world and the next. Here comes in the living tradition which fills in details, and provides fresh formulas to supply fresh needs. This duty falls upon the successors who are elected as chiefs of the sect, upon whom the mantle of the founder is supposed to have fallen; sometimes, indeed, they are proclaimed to be successive incarnations of the god who first appeared in the founder. But this is only where the spiritual side of the peculiar doctrine has been very much darkened, either intentionally or by ignorance.

All these transitions in the working out of religious creeds and dogmas are visible in India at the present day. We can perceive how the religious ideas of a great population do not develop regularly and simultaneously through regular stages in one direction, or from one starting-point; but that ideas, simple and complex, physical and metaphysical, moral and immoral, grow up together in a jumble, the strongest growth absorbing the weaker ones. In India, of course, the whole atmosphere is gradually changing, but we have yet to see how this will modify the old belief. Speaking broadly, and excluding Europeanised societies, it may be said that nowhere as yet in India has morality become essential to the credibility of a divine narrative. Perhaps, indeed, the course of ideas in modern India may never lead up to this necessity, and the Hindus may retain their primitive notions of malignant deities as being reasonably in accordance with the perceived analogies of Nature, and as furnishing quite as good an explanation of the prevalence of evil in this world as any hitherto discovered by philosophers. For Mill's conclusion, that of accepting a Divinity, but doubting His omnipotence, is, whatever he may say to the contrary, a kind of philosophic return toward the idea of popular polytheism, a distribution of divine powers. And the main practical objection to its becoming popular is, that it in no way satisfies the religious feeling of desire for perfect trust and dependence which is peculiar to Christianity and Islam. In Hinduism also this feeling is universal but vague and transcendental, not belonging necessarily to the conception of the personal gods. That belief in a moral purpose and a just Providence should be rooted in the Hindu mind, side by side with all these absurd mythologies, is only one of the numerous anomalies natural to symbolic polytheism, which should neither derange nor confirm any theory about the origin of the mythology. Yet the co-existence in the same community of irrational and monstrous myths with sublime conceptions of the ways of God toward men has not only been marked as a puzzling contradiction, but has been used as evidence that the source of divine myths was never really religious belief, but is to be found in metaphoric expressions.

It seems to have been argued that because Eumæus in the Odyssey speaks reasonably and reverentially of God, therefore his generation could not actually have invented or believed the undignified and scandalous stories about the gods. And consistency is saved by the theory that the scandalous stories were only distorted Nature myths. Nevertheless, it is quite certain, and open to proof, that a pagan will invent and worship the most indefensible gods, and will simultaneously believe generally in a moral purpose and a supreme dispensation of justice and judgment to come. Any Hindu will call on God to attest the justice of his cause, precisely as a Christian might, though, at the same time, he worships any number of specific divinities who have no pretensions to moral ideas. And the real explanation of the contradiction is that the specific god is seldom anything more than a glorified supernatural figure of a man, not necessarily virtuous at all, only undoubtedly powerful; he is the great image of authority. The innumerable gods of Hinduism are very largely deified ghosts, or famous personages invested with all sorts of attributes in order to account for the caprices of Nature. This is the state of the vulgar pagan mind; by the more reflective intelligence the gods are recognised as existent, and as beings capable of making themselves very troublesome, whom it is therefore good to propitiate, like governing people. At the same time a devout man trusts that there is something better beyond and above these gods, and that the moral purpose works itself somehow straight in spite of their capricious influences; at any rate, there is death, absorption, or annihilation, by which one may escape that dread of the gods which troubles the life of man down to its inmost depths. But whether the Hindus tend toward improving their popular divinities into rational gods, or into moral gods, or into gods inconceivable yet credible, or toward sinking them all in the ocean of pantheism or of materialism, we may be sure that both the fantastic demi-gods and the mystical spiritualists will have their acts and sayings melted down, and recast to suit the exigencies of the times. All sorts of fictions will be employed to manage the further transition by gentle gradients and breaks, to serve for a curtain behind which the costumes are changed and the scenes shifted. And it is probable that later on scientific enquirers from a distance (either of space or time) will become so puzzled by the anomalies and contradictions thus produced, not only by the original confusion of belief, but also by the processes which these beliefs and the narratives of their origin have undergone in being adapted to different levels of credulity or conscience, that they will distrust altogether the actuality of the human leaven which is at the bottom of these fermentations. People will show how the divine narratives grew up, and were pieced together, out of unconscious allegory, poetic symbolism, personification of Nature, or disguise of language, and will decide, because these are necessary conditions to the existence and transitions of a divine myth, that its hero has no more authentic human origin. Yet the Hindu at any rate, with his strong sense of personality after death, and of the necessity for providing a fresh tenement for the soul disembodied, has certainly built up the greater part of his inhabited pantheon out of the actions and words of real men; and he mostly follows, not will-o'-the-wisps and distorted metaphors, but the deep footsteps left by extraordinary men in their passage through the world. He cannot believe that these souls have gone for ever; he is continually recalling them and worshipping them; he will not let the heroic shade depart to the shades below ὃν πότμον γοόωσα, but translates him at once into a present spirit.

To conclude. It has been thought worth while to lay so much stress in this paper upon the fact that the actual gods of Asiatic polytheism have been mostly

men, because the broad, impersonal theories now in vogue about the origin and development of religious belief usually ignore this fact, more or less. Because an immense quantity of superstitious gossip about the gods, of fairy tales, folk-lore, and the like, are evidently fables, built up out of mere words, therefore the extreme comparative mythologist appears to infer that the central divine figures round which all this floating fable gathers are also nebulous and unreal. To dissipate the stories which cluster round a god, and to dissipate the god himself, are two distinct operations; and there is room for doubting whether the mythologists observe this distinction in dealing with strange, outlandish deities, though it is well-known nearer home. This may be a mistaken view of the extent to which comparative mythology desires to go, for it is difficult to ascertain positively how far the writers would actually carry their dissolving process; but certainly the general drift of some standard works upon mythology appears to imply that polytheism gradually grew and took shapes out of mere abstractions and the habit of metaphoric talk. If this were accepted as a comprehensive explanation of the worship and multiform gods of the Hindus, for instance, it would, I think, entail a wrong apprehension of the beginning and development of primitive beliefs. For there appears to be sufficient ground for contending that such beliefs do not form themselves upon the personification of natural phenomena, or by accidental linguistic coincidences, so much as by deifying authentic men. And the popularity of the impersonal explanations seems to be very much connected with the exigencies or a transitional state of religion, which requires all stiff dogmas and clear-cut individualities to be softened down into a haze. However this may be, within the domain of religion, as sometimes within that of history, it is worth while to point out the danger of carrying too far the method which obliterates the influence of persons, and ascribes all movement to general causes, physical or metaphysical. Those who are masters of the subject may preserve their own understanding of the true proportion in the general landscape of each religious period that should be allotted to the great figures in the foreground; but upon the unlearned the effect is apt to be hazy, and a broad view is mistaken for a dead flat. Nor has any religion acquired permanent dominion on a grand scale in the world which has not traced its origin to the example and teaching of some historic founder. Certainly it would be to depopulate and take a great part of the life out of Indian polytheism if we could suppose that it consisted only of an aggregate of fortuitous impersonations of inanimate Nature.

III

NATURAL RELIGION IN INDIA[1]

Natural Religion as exemplified by Hinduism—Meanings of the term Hindu—Hinduism apart from the three Historical religions of the world—Development of natural with supernatural beliefs—Belief in the soul's survival—Deification of humanity—Propitiation—Ritual—Pantheism—Final liberation of illusions—Recognition of Divine Unity.

I SHALL not endeavour to give, in this single lecture, any general description of Indian Religions. Nor do I propose to make any appreciable addition to the vast heap of facts and anecdotes, fables and folklore, that have been already collected in support of different theories regarding the origin of myth, ritual, primitive worships, and rudimentary belief. My present purpose is to draw attention, briefly, to the particular importance of India as a field of observation and research in identifying and tracing through connected stages the growth and filiation of some of the principal ideas that undoubtedly lie at the roots of Natural Religion. When I speak of Religion in India, I mean, for

[1] "Rede Lecture." Cambridge, 1891.

the purpose of this Lecture, Hinduism. And if I were asked for a definition of Hinduism, I could give no precise answer; I could not define it concisely by giving its central doctrines and its essential articles of faith; as I might do in describing one of the great historical Religions. For the word Hindu is not exclusively a religious denomination; it denotes also a country, and to a certain degree a race. When we speak of a Christian, a Mahomedan, or a Buddhist, we mean a particular religious community, in the widest sense, without distinction of race or place. When we talk of a Russian or a Persian, we indicate country or parentage without distinction of creed. But when a man tells me that he is a Hindu, I know that he means all three things together — Religion, Parentage, and Country. I can be almost sure that he is an inhabitant of India, I know that he is an Indian by birth and descent; and as to his religion, the word Hindu, though it is rather indefinite, undoubtedly places him within one of the many groups or castes that follow the ordinances and worship the gods who are recognised by the Brahmans.

I would ask you to remark that we have here at once, at the first word, a significant indication of the peculiar character and composition of Hinduism. This triple meaning or connotation of the term Hindu shows the complexity of its origin, shows how Hinduism is twisted deep among the roots of Indian society, how it is a matter of birthright and inheritance; signifies that it means a civil community, quite as much as a religious association—that a man does not become a Hindu, but is born into Hinduism.

Let me illustrate this view of Hinduism, as different in type, origin, and constitution from the other great Religions, by pointing to its position on what I may call a Religious map of the world—I suppose that in fact the geographical areas occupied by the chief religions have often been mapped out. We may put aside Africa as wholly barbarous and benighted, except where its edges have been touched by light from Asia. Then such a map, supposing that it gave only the broad outlines and divisions, would exhibit all Europe and America overspread by Christianity, and in Asia it would show that the three grand Historic Faiths or Creeds—Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism—have made a nominal partition of the whole continent, with the notable exception of one country. It would be seen that in all the three continents there is one, and only one, country of the first magnitude, only one large population of settled civilisation, that is not annexed to, or at least claimed by, one or another of these three spiritual empires; and that people are the Hindus. If we mark off roughly the spheres of religion in Asia, we may assign the north-eastern provinces of the Russian empire, including Siberia, to Christianity.[1] In western and central Asia, from the Red Sea and the Mediterranean to the borders of India and the Chinese empire, the religion is, speaking broadly, Mahomedan. On the other side, in eastern and north-eastern Asia, throughout China, in Japan, Burmah, and Siam, the established Church, the Faith that is incontestably predominant, though not exclusively accepted, is Buddhist. So that while in the north, the west, and the centre of Asia the people and their rulers are worshippers of one God, in the whole of eastern Asia Buddhism, which acknowledges no supreme personal deity, still holds the chief place, and maintains a kind of high catholic dominion. The people who stand between but stand apart from both monotheism and Buddhism, are the Hindus; they are the sole surviving representatives of a great polytheistic system. We have in India a population that has been in-

[1] Twenty-five per cent. of the Siberian population are Mahomedan; nevertheless Christianity dominates.

cessantly conquered politically, but never overpowered or subdued spiritually, it has expelled Buddhism, successfully resisted Islam, and has been very little affected even by Christianity. Hinduism has preserved its independence between two powerful and imposing religious sovereignties—between Islam, the Faith militant, and Buddhism, the Faith contemplative, the religion of action and the religion of thought. The 200 millions of Hindus constitute the only considerable section of more or less civilised humanity that does not at this moment acquiesce in the religious authority of Buddha, of Mahomet, or of some Christian Church.

Now it must always be remembered that the Indians are not a rude and unintelligent folk upon whom great intellectual movements take little hold. On the contrary, they are the most subtle-minded and profoundly devout people in Asia. And so far am I from regarding Hinduism as unconnected with the deeper currents of spiritual ideas, that I take India to be one of the religious water-sheds of the world. I mean that as from some high ridge or plateau the rivers rise and run down into distant lands, so from India there has been a large outflow of religious ideas over Asia. It has, of course, been the fountain-head of Buddhism, which has flooded, as I have said, all eastern Asia; while I believe that the influence of Indian theosophy spread at the beginning of the Christian era as far west as Alexandria and Antioch. I am told that it profoundly affected the ancient religion of Persia; and it may be traceable later in the mysticism of the Persian Sufis. But while the religious thought of India has thus radiated out east and west across the Asiatic Continent, I doubt whether Hinduism, the immemorial religion of the Indian people, has in all these ages assimilated a single important or prolific idea from outside India. The current of ideas is not always above ground, it often subsides and reappears; but it seems to me to have flowed steadily out of India; until its natural course was disturbed by the violent irruption of Islam. It is in this manner that Hinduism may be said to represent high religious ground that has been for ages a dividing line between the great religious systems that have overspread the countries on either side of it. Its characteristic is the entire absence of system; it has never been under the political control or regulation of a State; it has never been organised ecclesiastically. For, in the first place, the long dominion in India of foreigners, aliens in race and religion, seems to me not only to have arrested the intellectual development of Hinduism during the last eight hundred years, but also to have kept it in a dislocated and inorganic condition. And secondly, the Hindu priesthood, though powerful, has never been able to bring within specific limits the wandering beliefs of an intensely superstitious people. The Brahmans exercise immense authority, yet they have never obtained any effective mastery over the incessant movements and changes of belief and ritual in Hinduism. The result has been that there prevails, and has always prevailed, a great incoherence and diversity in the divine affairs of India; there has been a loose and luxuriant growth of religious fancies and usages; and the religion has become a conglomerate of rude worship and high liturgies; of superstitions and philosophies, belonging to very different phases of society and mental culture. I doubt whether there is anything like it in any other part of the world. And I regard Hinduism as a survival from those early ages when in the midst of a highly organised civil society Religion was still in a state of confusion; before the rise and establishment of the great historic Churches and Creeds which have since made a partition of the old world, from Ireland eastward to the Indus. From looking closely at India as it is we can best form a notion of ancient polytheism, not such as that which in Europe we have for centuries called

paganism because it lingered longest in the rural districts, but polytheism before its decline and fall, when it was the religion of the civilised world under the Roman Empire. Such is popular Hinduism as we still see it flourishing in India; and for the purposes of this lecture I propose to call it Natural Religion.

Now I do not of course use the term Natural Religion in the sense given to it by Bishop Butler, when he said that Christianity was a republication of Natural Religion. He meant, I think, religion according to right reason, framed upon the principle of accepting the course and constitution of Nature as an index of the Divine Will. The meaning that I wish to convey is of Religion in what Hobbes would call a State of Nature, moulded only by circumstances and feelings, and founded upon analogies drawn sometimes with ignorant simplicity, sometimes with great subtlety, from the operation of natural agencies and phenomena. The presence, the doings, and the character of numerous superhuman beings are thus directly inferred from what actually happens to men in the world around them; and a mysterious kind of design is perceived in every uncommon motion, or shape, or sensation. What is it that evidently suggests the intentions and sets the model of divinity thus realised? Nothing but capricious and freely acting Nature; the religious feeling works by taking impressions or reflections, sometimes rough and grotesque, sometimes refined and artistic, from all that men hear and feel and see. This is what I desire to call Natural Religion, because it has grown up in this manner spontaneously out of the free play of man's fears and hopes, and his guesses at the truth of this unintelligible world. I mean a religion that has not yet acquired a distinctive form and a settled base, but is constantly springing up and reproducing itself under different shapes, in diverse species; and throwing out varieties of rite and worship according to the changing needs and conditions of the people. I have no doubt whatever that in many uncivilised countries something of this kind is always going on. But I believe that in no modern country has Natural Religion been as long undisturbed, or has reached anything like the height or expansion that it has attained in India. My point is that Hinduism can be seen growing, that one can discern the earliest notions, rude and vague, among the primitive jungle tribes, that one can see the same ideas and practices upon a higher level, in more distinct and reasonable shape, among the settled classes; and that one can follow them upwards until they merge into allegory, mysticism, or abstract philosophical conceptions. I think that it is possible to trace in India, less obscurely than elsewhere, the development of natural experiences into supernatural beliefs. I do not pretend that India contains any very rare or unusual kinds of ritual or worship; for nothing is more remarkable than the persistent similarity of such ideas and practices among primitive folk. What makes India so valuable as a field of observation, is that the various forms and species lie close together in one country at the same time, so that their differences and affinities can be compared. In short, I believe that India, from its position in the world, from its past history, from its present state, and because it is an antique society thoroughly accessible to modern research, presents an almost unique opportunity for the comprehensive study of the history of Natural Religion.

The time at my disposal to-day only allows me to illustrate this position by reference to a few of the most universal and prolific among primary religious beliefs. Let me take the theory that Dreams and Ghosts are the sources of the earliest superstitions—it is a theory much in vogue at the present time, though it is by no means a modern discovery. Now the evidence that can

be collected and brought to bear from India on this theory is abundant and exceedingly impressive, because it brings out perceptible links and gradations between spirit worship and the adoration of the higher divinities.

Fear is a primordial affection of the human mind; and the continual terror which haunts savage men, as it does wild animals, and which is at the bottom of all superstition, seems to have been originally little more than the instinctive fright at strange sounds and sights that we can still see in domestic animals. We can judge how strong this terror must have been by noticing how long it has lasted. Just as the shying of a horse at a bush is the survival of the ancestral instinct that made his far-off progenitors shun anything strange and therefore dangerous, so, I think, the unreasoning horror that is apt to come over people at the image of a ghost, or even at a ghost story, is traceable backward to the times when our ancestors felt themselves to be surrounded by capricious or malignant beings. The fear of ghosts is the faint shadow still left on our imaginations by the universal belief of primitive folk that they were haunted by the spirits of the dead.

Now the essential characteristic of ghosts is given better by the French word than by the English — it is a *Revenant*, one that returns. And if I were asked to make a conjecture why this notion of the return or reappearance of a dead man's spirit is so widespread, I should reply by pointing to the one fundamental fact, the first and most formidable law—that comes home to all men and partly I suspect to some of the higher animals—the endless succession in Nature of birth, death, and revival. I do not think it possible to overrate the deep impression that must be engraved on the minds of the earlier races of mankind by the continual perishing and reproduction of all animate things. To man in his wild state the same life appears to stir in everything, in running water, in a tree, and in a creature; it ends and disappears in everything at times, but it reappears again constantly, in shape, movement, and outward character so similar as to seem identical; conveying the inference that something has gone and come again; there is nothing around a savage to suggest that the animating principle of vitality suffers more than suspension or displacement. The analogy of Nature affords him no presumption that death means extinction, while his imagination supplies him with constant evidence to the contrary.

But however this may be, one thing seems sure, whatever may be the reason of it, that although the fact that all men die rests upon the most direct, conclusive, and unquestionable evidence, constantly renewed, yet no race of men ever seems to have accepted death as the certain end of the dead man's personality. Among primitive folk the presumption seems to have been exactly the reverse; they are all convinced that his soul has only gone elsewhere; they do not regard life as extinguished; they look for signs and tokens of it somewhere else; and they are incessantly haunted, asleep or awake, with the apparitions of familiar forms or hints of a familiar presence. This incapacity or desperate refusal to acquiesce in the finality of death powerfully affects all the primitive races of India; and it is my opinion that the notion of the survival, reappearance, and transmission of the soul or spirit runs like a spinal cord through the whole connected stories of the beliefs that are comprised in Hinduism. It pervades, I think, all classes of Indian society; it is the chief motive of ritual, it explains the origin of many divinities, and it underlies some of the cardinal doctrines of high Brahmanic orthodoxy. The notion is seen very plainly in the least advanced societies. The Khasia Hills, for example, are peopled by a very simple folk, whom until lately the propagation of Brahmanism had scarcely reached. In those hills, when a man dies far from home, his friends tie threads across the streams near his village, in order to provide the spirit with

a bridge on his return journey; and I mention this particularly because the custom may throw some light on the well-known inability of Scottish elves and sprites to cross running water.[1] Among the Khasias also, when a man dies abroad, a cock is killed that the bird may wake the ghost early each day on his travel homeward; and as far as I could make out when I visited the country, the indigenous religion consists almost wholly of the worship of the spirits of the dead. Now the beliefs of the Khasia folk are merely a sample of the ideas universally prevalent, among the aborigines of India, regarding the returning spirit. If again we go among the general settled population of Hindus, we find the same feelings persistent among them. The lament at a Hindu funeral says, "That which has spoken has gone — the Spirit has departed"—and at the same time there runs through their obsequies the notion that the wandering soul of the dead person must be provided with a new refuge, must be harboured, and comforted. As bodily death is a giving up of the ghost, he must be provided with a fresh tenement, or at least with some temporary accommodation; and here comes in the very general custom among certain classes of Hindus, after a cremation, of picking up at the funeral pyre some small object in which the soul is supposed, by a fiction, to have taken refuge after the body has been burnt, and of carrying it back to the dead man's house.

You will observe that the belief in survival involves the necessity of giving the homeless spirit some local habitation; he must take up his abode in something animate or inanimate, in a tree, an animal, or perhaps in queer-looking stocks and stones. He is thus likely to be haunting places in some shadowy or substantial form; he may be helping his friends and plaguing his enemies; his presence can be discovered by the breaking out of a disease, by an odd accident, or by the strange behaviour of an animal. One remarkable case is worth mentioning to an English audience. Some fifty years ago a very high English official died in a fortress, at a place that is one of the centres of Brahmanic orthodoxy; and at the moment when the news of his death reached the Sepoy guard at the main gate, a black cat rushed out of it. The guard presented arms to the cat, as a salute to the flying spirit of the powerful Englishman; and the coincidence took so firm a hold of the locality that up to a few years ago neither exhortation nor orders could prevent a Hindu sentry at that gate from presenting arms to any cat that passed out of the fort at night.

My conjecture is that a great part of what is called Animism—the tendency to discover human life and agency in all moving things, whether waving trees or wandering beasts — begins with this ingrained conviction that some new form or habitation must be provided for the spirits of dead men. I do not pretend that in India the whole worship of trees and animals can be traced to this habit of the mind, but I believe that the widespread idea of possession by spirits or demons, particularly the very common notion that the soul of a wicked or miserable man is inside a wild beast, does come largely from the imaginary necessity of finding lodging and employment for ghosts.

Nothing indeed is more common in India than the belief that the spirits of dead men have passed into certain animals, and I could give some curious instances of the manner in which this passage of the spirit through an animal shape affects the subsequent development of a deity, who often retains in his attributes, symbols, and mythology, the recollection of this earlier stage of his metamorphosis. But this is a side line of my main subject, and anticipates a later stage of it. I can only say here

[1] "If you can interpose a brook between you and witches, spectres, or even fiends, you are in perfect safety." Note to Scott's "Lay of the Last Minstrel." The notion may be that they need some help to bring them across it.

that in India the worship of animals becomes crossed and intertwined at a very early stage with the worship of spirits, in a manner very difficult to unravel; that there is good evidence that as the ghost developed into a god, he retained some characteristic of the animal whom he may have at one time inhabited, which animal often became in a later stage one of the god's temporary embodiments. A serpent, for example, is unquestionably dreaded, and therefore worshipped, as a dangerous and mysterious beast; and for that very reason he may be also treated as the embodiment of a malignant and subtle spirit recently passed away from among men. Later on the sacred snake is regarded as the shape into which some sage or semi-divine person has become transformed. And ultimately it becomes the emblem or allegorical symbol of a great god. I repeat, that at the bottom of all these imaginary changes lies the belief in survival, the notion that death is transmigration, and that man is encompassed by the restless and roving spirits of the dead, who have human wants and affections, and superhuman powers. All these fancies appear to me to become grouped and interlaced in the word superstition — a word that may have originally meant something like survival —and out of this atmosphere of ghostly terrors, griefs, and wonder the rudimentary deities seem to me to be continually issuing.

It is certain that in India one can distinctly follow the evolution of the ghosts of men whose life or death has been notorious, into gods. Wherever in India the beliefs can still be found in an elementary or indigenous state, wherever they appear to have grown up spontaneously, some of the principal deities can be identified with the spirits of departed humanity. When I lived for some years in a province of central India that had been very little touched by external influences, I had many opportunities of personally verifying this fact. In the outlying districts one could find everywhere the worship of the spirits of men who had been distinguished for valour, wisdom, piety, or misfortune, for a notable life or a tragic death. Their Manes were propitiated; and if their power to harm or to help increased, their tombs might become shrines or temples; and the offerings to the dead might develop into sacrifices. The report that a god has lived on earth as a man, the fact that he has been perfectly well known in the neighbourhood, are no prejudice whatever to his subsequent dignity; though as his wonder-working reputation rises, his earthly history becomes usually more dim and mystical; the legend comes in to disguise his mortal origin, and he veils himself more and more under divine attributes. If we look steadily at these processes, visible in the clear daylight of the present time, they may well seem to reflect, as in a mirror, the fables and mythologies of the antique world, and to throw a ray of light on their origin; while the reality of the thing is brought home to us by the fact that the spirits of more than one Englishman, and of one Englishwoman, are now worshipped in India. General Nicholson, who was killed in the storming of Delhi, had a sect of worshippers; and in south India they adore the spirit of Captain Pole, who was mortally wounded and died in a forest; the people dug his grave, built his shrine, and employed a local priest to devise a form of worship that was certainly going on within the last few years.

But the authentic transformation of the disembodied spirit into a superhuman being is contested by no one; the difficulty is only to disentangle the ghost, the divine ancestor, and the incipient deity with his attributes or special powers. They seem to be often blended, and their earthly and unearthly characters remain for a certain time interfused. We had last year a census of all India; and I noticed in an Indian

newspaper of March last that one Hindu householder filled up his schedule by returning, as Head of the Family, his household deity, whose profession he described as subsistence on an endowment, while the question whether the divine personage was or was not literate was somewhat indirectly answered by entering him as Omniscient. At a later stage, when the divinity is once clearly established, his special attributes or department may be determined by an accident. We may take, as an example, the history of Hurdeo Lala, who was, not very long ago, poisoned in central India by his brother through jealousy. This was a sensational murder, not unlike that of Hamlet's father; and whereas in England he might have been commemorated by a tragic drama, a mournful ballad, or by a figure in a wax-work exhibition, in India temples were erected to him. Some time afterward, when the cholera broke out suddenly and fiercely in a camp that was pitched close to his shrine, it was ascribed by public opinion to the displeasure of his injured ghost, who was thus credited with the power of letting loose epidemics; so Hurdeo Lala became the special god of cholera in that region. It is in this manner that dim shapes and mere superstitious dread gradually give place to the distinct image and definite attributes of divinity.

Thus it seems to me, if I may here briefly recapitulate, that everywhere in India the natural propensity to adore curious, terrible, or beneficent things has become crossed and mixed up with the habit of detecting human spirits everywhere. This leads to the deification of humanity; which is throughout so much the strongest element in the shaping of superstitious imagery that it gradually absorbs all other elements. And thus the detection of divine power or purpose in plants and animals, in stocks and stones, in plagues and diseases, has a tendency to coalesce and harden into the worship of some glorified man, who may have the place as his sanctuary, the plant or animal as his embodiment, or the plague as his attribute. The adoration is paid both to the object, and to the spirit that has become accidentally connected with the object, and the two lines of worship take human shape eventually.

It is true that the deification of notables does not go on in India in so regular and recognised a fashion as in China, where the gods and their ritual are under State patronage and authority, and where promotions from the lower to the higher grades of the Pantheon are often announced in the Official Gazette. In India, Religion has always been, as I have said, independent of State supervision, and is only imperfectly controlled by the priesthood. The minor Indian spirit is left to rise by his own merit and by popular suffrage; the foreign governments that have so long ruled in India are either hostile or indifferent—and in these latter days the gradual spread of wider knowledge of the outer world, the general stir and movement of civilised and peaceful life, the spread of education, are undermining the whole fabric of these beliefs, and driving them into obscure corners. In the course of one or two generations they will probably dwindle down to the condition of paganism or heathenism; they will be regarded as the quaint, old-fashioned superstitions of the wolds or the remote rural districts; and thus the embryonic stages of the generation of gods will gradually disappear. The origin of the divine species, the descent of the deities from man, may then come to be vigorously disputed by scholars and antiquarians; the saints and heroes will become fabulous and manifestly unreal, and their true evolution will be explained philologically, or demonstrated by the science of comparative mythology.

At present, however, the deification of ghosts can be unquestionably established by the collection of plentiful evidence in India. Of course I do not pretend that it covers the whole ground, or that it is more than one of the sources

which have produced the confused multitude of deities that are worshipped there. And I am well aware that the genealogy of deities has been traced back to ancestral and spirit worship in various countries. Nevertheless we have never before been able to take such a comprehensive survey of the actual process; and the value of observations taken in India is that it gives us not only the earliest but the latest stages of deification, and shows us the connected series. We have at the bottom the universal worship of spirits partly ancestral and commemorative, in part propitiatory; we see them gradually transmuted into household gods, local deities, and divinities of special forms, attributes, and departments; while at the top we have the full-blown adoration of the lofty Brahmanic deities who preside over the operations of Nature and the strongest passions of mankind.

The verification of such an important phase in the Natural History of polytheism seems to me not the least curious result of that remarkable contact and contrast between ancient and modern ideas and institutions, that is represented by the English in India. To us, whom political circumstances have brought more closely than any other modern nation into relation with archaic beliefs, it is of particular interest that we should find in India a strong corroboration of the theory that was adopted, from a point of view different yet not altogether dissimilar, by those who stood face to face with the decaying polytheism of the Roman empire. It was positively affirmed by the Christian Fathers and apologists that the gods of classic paganism were deified men. Tertullian challenges the heathen to deny it; and Augustine vehemently asserts it. "For with such blindness," he says, "do impious men, as it were, stumble over mountains, and will not see the things which strike their own eyes, that they do not attend to the fact that in all the literature of the Pagans there are not found any, or scarcely any, gods who have not been men to whom when dead divine honours were paid."[1]

You will remember that I began by throwing out the conjecture that the original bent or form of Natural Religion had been moulded upon the deep impression stamped on primitive minds by the perpetual death and reappearance, or resuscitation, of animate things. And I argued that the incessant presence of this visible operation, aided by the natural feelings of terror and regret, had generated in the imagination of the earliest races their intense conviction that the death of man is only the transmigration of his soul, that he only suffers a change of shape or abode. I suggested that this had contributed to produce spirit worship generally, and had led to the adoration of the more illustrious spirits, who were invested with superior powers, and became gods. Where now, in the upper grades of Hinduism, may we observe the full growth and maturity of these primordial ideas? We see them, I think, magnified and reproduced upon a grand and imposing scale, in the supreme divinities of Hindu theology, in Vishnu and Siva; for Brahma, the creative energy, is too remote and abstract an influence for popular worship. Siva represents what I have taken to be the earliest and universal impression of Nature upon men—the impression of endless and pitiless change. He is the destroyer and rebuilder of various forms of life; he has charge of the whole circle of animated creation, the incessant round of birth and death in which all Nature eternally revolves. His attributes are indicated by symbols emblematic of death and of man's desire; he presides over the ebb and flow of sentient existence. In Siva we have the condensation of the two primordial agencies, the striving to live and the forces that kill; and thus, philosophically speaking, we see in this great divinity a comprehensive transfiguration of that idea which, as I repeat, I hold to be the root of

[1] *De Civitate Dei.*

Natural Religion. He exhibits by images, emblems, and allegorical carvings the whole course and revolution of Nature, the inexorable law of the alternate triumph of life and death—Mors Janua Vitae—the unending circle of indestructible animation.

Vishnu, on the other hand, impersonates the higher evolution; the upward tendency of the human spirit. He represents several great and far-reaching religious ideas. In the increasing flux and change of all things he is their Preserver; and although he is one of the highest gods he has constantly revisited the earth either in animal or in human shape. What are the modes and ascending flights by which the spirits, who have been deified for their valour, sanctity, or beneficence, are brought into relation with this supreme conception of divinity? They rise by the medium of the Avatárs, the descents or reappearances of Vishnu, who personifies the doctrine of successive divine embodiments, which is one of the most important in Hinduism. Most of the famous saints, heroes, and demigods of poetry and romance, with many of the superior divinities, are recognised as having been the sensible manifestations of Vishnu; their bodies were only the mortal vesture that he assumed for the purpose of interposing decisively at some great emergency, or whenever he condescended to become again an actor in the world's drama. It must be clearly understood that this theory of the divine embodiment is one of the most essential and effective doctrines of Hinduism; it links together and explains the various phases of the religion, connecting the lower with the higher ideas, and providing them with a common ground or method of reconciliation. It serves to show, for instance, that the sacred animal of a wild tribe is merely the great Brahmanic deity in disguise, or it may prove that the worshippers of some obscure or local hero have been adoring Vishnu unawares. It thus accommodates and absorbs the lower deities; and while it draws them up to the sky and completes their apotheosis, it also brings the higher gods constantly down again from heaven to take part in human affairs. We thus find running through all Hinduism, first the belief in the migration of spirits when divorced from the body, next their deification, and latterly their identification with the supreme abstract divinities. But these supreme divinities reappear again in various earthly forms; so that there is a continual passage to and fro between men and gods, gods and men. And thus we have the electric current of all-pervading divine energy completing its circle through diverse forms, until we reach the conception of all Nature being possessed by the divinity.

We are now on the limit of that which I take to be the intellectual climax of the evolution of Natural Religion — I mean the doctrine of Pantheism. The adoration of innumerable spirits becomes gradually collected into the main channels and runs into the anthropomorphic moulds of the higher polytheism, which again is still further condensed into the recognition of the Brahmanic Trinity under multitudinous shapes, signs, and attributes. And as all rivers end in the sea, so every sign, symbol, figure, or active energy of divinity, is ultimately regarded as the outward expression of that single universal divine potency, which is everywhere immanent in the world, which in fact *is* the World.

I must guard myself from being understood to hold that the deification of humanity accounts for all Hinduism; for in India every visible presentation of force, everything that can harm or help mankind, is worshipped; at first instinctively and directly, latterly as the token of divinity working behind the phenomenal veil. We have of course to take into account the direct adoration paid to the mountains and rivers, to the Sun and the Moon, to the Sky and Winds, and to such abstract personifications as the goddess Fortune. And into the allegorical and mythological branch of this vast subject I cannot here enter.

It is now time for me to turn to another side of Hinduism, to its Ritual, which is in its early stages a vast method of propitiation, and latterly a lofty kind of ceremonial liturgy. My view is that just as the higher polytheism is connected by descent with the aboriginal veneration of disembodied spirits, so likewise much of the ritual can be followed back, in India, to primitive obsequies, to methods for laying the ghost, for feeding, comforting, and conciliating him. Many years ago, on my road home to England, I travelled straight from the depths of central India to Paris, and on the Boulevards I came suddenly to a stand before a fashionable mourning warehouse, which had in large letters on the plate glass the motto, *Le deuil est un culte*—Mourning is worship. As this was precisely the conclusion that had been suggested to me a month earlier, by the sight of the funeral rights of the Bheels, a wild folk in the jungles, I was startled by finding it proclaimed in Paris as an advertisement of crape and black silk. And I began to consider whether this might not be the attenuated survival of a remote but once universal idea. For the ceremonies, the honours and attentions paid to the dead, among primitive societies in India, seemed to me intended to please and provide for the ghost; and some trace of this purpose may be discerned in almost every stage or gradation of funeral services among Hindus, from the lowest to the highest, from the offerings made to the dead and the wailing prayers of the rude tribes, up to the formal oblations prescribed by the Brahmanic High Church. You may have heard, for example, that the right to inherit property is by Hindu law co-extensive with the duty of making certain periodical offerings to the ancestral spirits.

I agree, therefore, that mourning in its original meaning partook largely of the nature of worship. I think the prayers were not for the dead man but addressed to him, that the funeral service was usually an offer or an attempt to do him service. And I find reason to believe that whenever a spirit became gradually translated to some higher degree of divinity, the earlier propitiation of the wandering ghost passed into a form of worship, that the offerings at the grave or shrine became sacrifices in the temple. Now I submit to you the general remark that in no existing religious system does sacrifice play such an important part, occupy such high ground, as in Hinduism. In the ancient world it may be said to have been almost an universal practice, the most essential of all religious observances. In the modern world it has almost entirely disappeared. It lingers in Mahomedanism as a figurative or commemorative act; in Buddhism the offerings are not propitiatory; they are pious gifts reverentially presented, chiefly as alms to the priesthood. But in India we can still see with our eyes the performance of sacrifices in almost every stage or step of an ascending scale; there is every variety of offering; the wild tribes slaughter buffaloes to the goddess Devi; the altars of Siva, in the heart of Calcutta, stream with the blood of goats; and although human sacrifice and self-sacrifice by suicide have now been everywhere suppressed, yet traditional remains of these customs still circulate in the outlying parts of the country. The Brahmans do their best to discourage and refine these savage rites, but as in the matter of the ruder gods so in regard to their ritual, the priesthood has never been strong enough to purify and regulate all the discordant usages of a most diversified society. It has thus come to pass that some very rough and barbarous rites are practised side by side with the pure and lofty ceremonial of the Vedic devotions. The idol may be the god itself, may be the consecrated image in which the deity is present, or may be merely the token or point for prayer and meditation; and according to the votary's conception of the god so is the intention and meaning of the sacrifice. The lowest conception seems to be that of providing food or service for the ghost, the highest is of a sin offering, or mysterious atonement.

Human sacrifice is one of the earliest forms of the rite. How did it first begin? Some very ingenious and intricate explanations of its origin have recently been suggested; I myself doubt whether we can go back with any certainty beyond the motive of pleasing or paying due honour to the ghost of some powerful personage. Perhaps the earliest notion to be found now authentically existing, not in India, but upon the Indian borderland, is that of despatching slaves or companions to accompany a dead chief on his journey into the next world—that is, into his new state of existence or abode. The tribes of our North-East frontier still make occasional raids upon the villages of the plain for the purpose of capturing Bengalees, whom they slay at the funeral of a chief in order to provide him with a retinue. In the case of prisoners taken in war there may also be the desire of finding a plausible, what we might call a sanctimonious, pretext for getting rid of them by slaying them on the altar; for nothing is more common than to find a sacred duty used to veil some motive of direct human interest or utility. However this may be, there is strong evidence connecting human sacrifice in India with funeral obsequies; and the view which I venture to put before you is that by the same process of development which converted the spirit into a deity, the slaying of slaves and captives to attend the departing ghost becomes the offering up of victims to powerful gods. There is no doubt whatever that human sacrifice has been held, is held, in India as elsewhere, to be a sovereign remedy for appeasing the wrath of the gods. Most of us have heard of the Meriah sacrifices among the Khonds, who periodically slaughtered human victims. There is moreover a well-authenticated case of an English official finding a victim tied up before a shrine during a sharp epidemic of cholera; and there was another mysterious incident not very long ago at a temple in that city which is chiefly given up to the worship of the great god Siva. I may mention, also, that certain unaccountable and apparently motiveless murders, very like those which some years ago frightened London, have occasionally been committed; and were probably due to the accomplishment of a vow made, like Jephtha's, to be fulfilled if a prayer for some great favour were answered.

But systematic human sacrifice, except among a few savage tribes, must have disappeared long ago from India. Such traditions of the custom as remain, point to the idea of resorting to it only on some great emergency or mysterious difficulty indicating divine displeasure. There is one world-wide and inveterate superstition belonging to the sacrificial class, of which we have many vestiges in India—it is the belief that a building can be made strong, can be prevented from falling, by burying alive some one, usually a child, under its foundations.

Grimm, in his "Teutonic Mythology," gives stories showing the prevalence of this custom in North Europe before the Teutonic tribes were Christianised. And the tradition still overshadows the imagination of primitive folk in India. I recollect that when one of the piers of a railway bridge was washed away by a flood in central India, there was a panic among the tribes of the neighbouring hills, who were possessed by the rumour that one of them was to be seized and buried in the basement when the pier should be rebuilt. The ghost of such a victim becomes naturally deified. On the bastion of many of the forts in that country is a sort of mimic grave or shrine, sacred to a dead man who is said to have been sacrificed long ago to keep up the wall of a fortress, and who has now become the tutelary spirit of bastions. But the Moghul emperor, Shah Jehan, was humane enough to bury goats instead of men under the walls of his fortified palace; and there has probably been a steady transition to milder forms of consecration. We still, in England, bury something, though only a few coins, under a foundation-stone; and without pretending to connect this formula with any

ritualistic origin, indicating propitiation for the building's safety, I may say that theories have been strung together on quite as far-fetched and as fanciful lines of association.

But sacrifice may also be voluntary, upon public or private grounds; and religious suicide has always had much vogue in India. There is a story of the commander of an army, who turned the adverse tide of battle by causing himself to be beheaded in front of his troops as a sacrifice to the gods. And though in military history I have discovered no other instance of a general who won an action by losing his head at a critical moment, yet the legend illustrates the persistence of the central idea that great emergencies demand supreme propitiatory acts. I admit, however, that to the sceptical mind, which discerns under every observance the germ of utilitarian motive, the story may present itself as no more than a pious invention to sanctify the sudden violent removal of an incapable or unlucky leader.

Let me now refer to the highest form of human self-sacrifice, the latest to disappear in some parts of India. I mean the custom of Suttee. In the burning of Hindu widows on the funeral pyre of their husbands, we may perceive two or three motives intertwined; we have, first, the primordial idea of sending a wife to accompany her husband into the next world, secondly, the much later doctrine, that for a widow to die in this manner with her husband is an act of the purest and noblest devotion, and lastly comes in the irrepressible utilitarian motive of liberating a great man's estate from the very serious burden of dowry for several widows. Some years ago a Hindu nobleman, with whom I was acquainted, had to support twelve of his father's widows; and those who have seen in Rajputána, on the marble tombs or cenotaphs of the chiefs, a long row of the figures of the wives and slave girls who were burnt with some great Rajah three or four generations back, might easily appreciate the danger to which the temptation of putting away defenceless women might expose widows in the dark ages of India.

These things were done, however, as Macbeth says, in the olden time, "ere human statute purged the gentle weal" —that is, before Governments were strong enough to support the higher morality of India in suppressing them. The savage forms of sacrifice are now extinct, but the later and milder varieties of immolation and offering exist in great abundance, far greater, as I have said, than in any other civilised country. The Ritual is the outward and visible sign of natural piety; for piety, as we are told in a Socratic dialogue,[1] is a sort of science of praying and sacrificing, of asking and giving. This definition, given at Athens more than 2000 years ago, exactly fits in with the apparent object of the ritual of Indian polytheism. Indeed its whole aspect is to me that of an open market or bazaar, in which these dealings are carried on under every kind of ensign, by every kind of device and method of intercourse, among an infinite number of establishments and profession.

For the characteristics of Natural Religion, the conditions of its existence as we see it in India, are complete liberty and material tolerance; there is no monopoly either of divine powers or even of sacerdotal privilege; since the Brahmans, though a most exclusive caste, are not an exclusive priesthood. No deity is invested with a supreme prerogative; no teacher proclaims himself the sole proprietor of the secret of the divine will; the army of the gods is not a fixed establishment; nor has the State ever asserted authority over the public worship. In India the British Government is more absolutely disconnected with the country's religion than in any other part of Her Majesty's dominions; it interposes only when barbarous customs fall within the range of the ordinary penal code; and in fact, the whole art and practice of Hinduism still lies open, as it has always done, to

[1] Euthyphro.

the changing influences of social and political environment.

It is this unrestrained indulgence of the religious propensities, this immemorial immunity from authoritative limitation, that has made India so important a field of study, especially for those who desire to understand the ancient polytheisms. For in the gradual transformations of the divine figures is seen the free and natural working of the radical ideas that seemed to have inspired the earliest forms of superstition everywhere, and to have determined their subsequent expansion. As with the gods, so with their ritual; one may see in India the stages and transitions; one may fancy that their pedigree can be identified, may find corroboration of the hypothesis that most of these customs and practices can be traced to a few primary sources.

What does Hobbes, in the "Leviathan," call the Natural Seed of Religion? "And in these Foure Things (he says), Opinion of Ghosts, Ignorance of Second Causes, Devotion toward what men fear, and Taking of Things casual for Prognostiques, consisteth the Natural Seed of Religion, which by reason of the different Fancies, Judgments, and Passions of severall men, hath grown up into ceremonies so different that those which are used by one man are for the most part ridiculous to another."

These words, quaint and stiff as they are, appear to me to cover most of the ground out of which polytheism in India has grown up, and, what is more, can be still seen growing. I do not mean that the process of transformation is always upward—I think that the strong tendency of beliefs and customs to improve is counteracted by another tendency towards degradation. I could give examples to show that a pure and exalted religious conception very often suffers decay and corruption, that spiritualism relapses into idolatry. But this is because the upper Hinduism has never been organised authoritatively, has never acquired the concentrated and sustained leverage that enables a powerful Church to lift the lower beliefs permanently up to the higher level. In Europe and western Asia the lesser worships and loose invertebrate beliefs have been systematically extirpated by Christianity and Islam, whereby the whole religious landscape has been entirely altered. The establishment of Churches and uncompromising Creeds with the enormous support given to them for centuries by autocratic and orthodox Governments, has laid out the ground of Religion like a stately and well-ordered domain. Even under the Roman empire Religion was largely the concern of the State, the city, or the nation; and in modern Europe the sense of uniformity, discipline, and symmetry in matters of faith and worship, has become deeply impressed on our minds by long habit and the force of law. Popular Hinduism, on the contrary, is left to multitudinous confusion; for it defies limitation, and it is obviously useless to stamp as pure and genuine any particular image or doctrine of divinity, if a great many others may issue and pass current simultaneously. And this state of things seems likely, to judge from the past history of religions, to continue so long as Hinduism remains without any central influence or superior control, but goes on reproducing itself and spreading from the natural seed. In short, the whole panorama of religious ideas and practices, in polytheistic India, may be compared to the entangled confusion of a primeval forest, where one sees trees of all kinds, ages, and sizes interlacing and contending with each other; some falling into decay, others shooting up vigorously and overtopping the crowd—while the glimpse of blue sky above the tree tops may symbolise the illimitable transcendental ideas above and apart from the earth-born conceptions.

For it must always be remembered that the dominant idea of intellectual Hinduism, the belief which overhangs all this jungle of superstitions, is the Unity of the Spirit under a plurality of

forms. Every religion must be in accord with the common experiences and needs of the people; but if it is to keep its hold on the higher minds it must also rest somewhere upon a philosophic theory; and Pantheism is the Philosophy of Natural Religion. The identity of all divine energies underlying this incessant stir and semblance of life in the world is soon recognised by reflective minds; the highest god as well as the lowest creature is a mere vessel of the Invisible Power; the god is only a peculiar and extraordinary manifestation of that power; the mysterious allegorical Trinity, Brahma, Vishnu, Siva, at the summit of Hinduism suggests and personifies its regular unchanging operation. It is of little use for those who attack Hinduism to insist that the mythology is a romance, or a disease of language; that the divinities are phantasms, that the idols are merely carved stones or cunning casts of clay. The higher Brahmans would probably agree that the popular polytheism is not much more than a symbolical representation in visible forms of the divine power that is everywhere immanent in Nature, and indeed identical with it. They might say that the anthropomorphic divinities are expressions of the various inscrutable powers that affect mankind; and that Infinite Unity cannot possibly be brought into relation with human affairs; but that no religion can flourish which does not concern itself or conform with the ordinary needs and circumstances of the world we live in. In this world of sensation the soul is locked up as in a prison; nor can it escape by the worship of gods, or by the help of any philosophy that relies upon experience. The only sure way of liberation is not by ascending an illimitable staircase which is always within the phenomenal circuit, but by purification of the soul from the illusion of the senses: until the whole fabric melts away like a vision, and the soul, being emancipated, attains to clear intellectual apprehension of divine knowledge.

In the meantime Pantheism is not an abstruse theologic doctrine; it is ingrained in the minds of all thoughtful persons; the inner meaning lies everywhere close below the outward worship, and it comes out at the first serious question. Queer idols and grotesque rites are to be seen everywhere in India, yet if any one were to challenge the priest or the worshipper to justify or explain them, he might very possibly receive an answer that would startle him by its subtlety, and by the momentary disclosure of some profound meaning underlying the irrational and superficial observance. And so Pantheism may be regarded as the final stage in the fusion and combination of the multitude of forms and conceptions bred out of vagrant superstitions; it does not stamp out or abolish them; it hardly cares to improve them; it explains and finds room for them all.

Thus forms and ceremonies, prayer and sacrifice, are useful only within the limits of this visible world, which is for gods as well as for men the sphere of action and concern. The highest devotion of Hinduism has for its object spiritual knowledge, the rescue of the soul from the ocean of illusory ephemeral existence; and this liberation is attained by the soul's passage through the vicissitudes of innumerable lives. Even here it is possible, I believe, to discern the remote influence of the persistent analogy from Nature; for there is no extravagance in supposing that the great Hindu dogma of the transmigration of souls still prolongs metaphysically the rule of change and transition by which the whole apparent universe is, to the Indian, so manifestly governed. The material conception of the homeless, wandering ghost, whom death is constantly dislodging, who may become a god, and again become a man, reappears in the moral doctrine of the laborious travel of the soul through many forms, through a labyrinth of painful and purifying existences; it is the promulgation of Natural law in the

Spiritual world. According to this doctrine every human being has suffered a long series of births and dissolutions, his present condition being the necessary consequence of his precedent doings or experiences. And the range of his diverse existences stretches from a vegetable to a divinity; for gods also are subject to the law which governs the world of sensation. The same soul that moved in the flower may reappear in the god; and we can here perceive that this doctrine mysteriously points to or shadows out the inner meaning of the connection or common basis that underlies and holds together the lower and higher forms of external worship.

Every successive death does indeed interrupt consciousness; but so does sleep; and as in the visible world our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting, while we nevertheless inherit the qualities, good or bad, of our progenitors; so between each stage of its journey the soul loses all remembrance of the past, yet its next life is influenced by the merits or demerits accumulated in previous states. I venture to suggest that the upward striving of Nature through the modifications of forms and species is reflected, as in a glass, darkly, by this vision of spiritual evolution that gradually liberates the soul from the bondage of conscious existence, that purges it from the periodical returns of life's fitful fever, and brings it to final release by absorption into the one Essence. Then at last it is seen that all the changes of mortal life are merely illusions of the Sense; that as Lady Macbeth has said, the sleeping and the dead are but as pictures; and that this manifold working of Nature is but a kind of embroidery on the curtain which hangs before the illumination of true spiritual knowledge.

"And as," says one of their textbooks, "by spreading out of a picture, all its figures are rendered plainly visible, so the apparent existence of the world is due to Máya—that is to say Illusion. With the destruction of this Illusion by knowledge phenomena are reduced to Unreality—just as the figures in the picture disappear when the canvas is rolled up."

I have thus endeavoured to give some general outline and measure of the vast difference in religious ideas and observances that separates the lower from the higher beliefs in India. It is the difference between the primitive belief in the survival and constant re-embodiment of the human ghost, and the philosophical notion of the soul's passage through a cycle of existences until it is absorbed into Spiritual Being. It is the difference between the superstition that every moving thing or wandering animal is possessed by a peculiar spirit, and the discovery that all nature is imbued by one divine energy. From the feeling that a god is phenomenally everywhere, the train of thought advances to the conviction that God is phenomenally nowhere, to the idealism that regards the whole world as a subjective creation of one's own illusive fancy. Although these differences are extreme, and cover from point to point the whole range of natural theology, yet they are not treated in Hinduism as mutually hostile or inconsistent; the higher ideas and observances tolerate, adopt, and interpret the lower; the worshipper at an ordinary temple, a man who adores a shapeless image, may, probably does, hold the highest Unitarian doctrines. His mind finds no difficulty in reconciling shifting multiformity at the base of his religion, with changeless Unity at the summit. No one, certainly not I, can pretend to give a clear demonstration of the whole line of connection, or to follow the processes of imagination and thought which lead from the belief in millions of gods to the recognition of one Universal Spirit, or to the final conclusion that He is Unknowable. I can only say that the impression produced upon myself, after long personal observation of Religion in India, is that the whole of this marvellous structure comes by what, for want of a better term, I must call natural growth.

CHAPTER IV

WITCHCRAFT AND NON-CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS

"Rebellion is as the sin of Witchcraft."

Enquiry into distinction between witchcraft and the lowest types of religion—Suggestion as to difference of origin and principles—Religion works invariably through some agency supposed to be divine; witchcraft works independently of priests and deities, and probably begins with some accidental discoveries of natural laws—Witches persecuted in polytheist countries because their under-working is contraband, unaided by recognised supernatural powers or methods—Resemblance of practices and devices of witch-finders in India to those formerly used in Europe—Cruelties inflicted on witches because they are supposed to be personally the cause of calamities; also, because the priests shift on to witches the blame of all inexplicable evils which the gods cannot or will not cure—As religion becomes purified and elevated, this shifting process increases, and witchcraft becomes more degraded and detested—Men go to witches for disreputable purposes, or when the gods fail to help—State of witchcraft under the British Government in India; it is possibly the lowest phase of empiric observation and inchoate science, and thus superior to mere vague supernaturalism.

To those who live in a country where the belief in witchcraft still pervades all classes, from highest to lowest (though of course the pressure of the superstition is far lighter upon the uppermost layers of society), the study of this delusion by autopsy of the living subject is most interesting. For we have all learnt the history of European witchcraft; how the fear of it once overspread the whole land, and faith in it was a cardinal doctrine with Church and State, with kings and judges; how it gradually faded, until the notion of such a thing has at last become ridiculous to all but the most ignorant; and how this virulent mental disease was expelled, not by refutation or any special remedy, but by a gradual change in the conditions of existence which had engendered and fostered it. We know, in fact, the precise position of witchcraft under the Christian dispensation; and we understand the view taken of it by our different churches in different ages. But this essay is meant to carry the enquiry further back, and to seek for more light upon the origin and development of the craft or practice of sorcery, by looking into its relations with the non-Christian religions, and by attempting to ascertain the place which it holds among those very superstitions with which Christians have constantly identified it.

Witchcraft has been usually supposed to be a very low and degraded phase of primitive religion. Now, this is largely true of the art in Europe, where the great Christian churches for ages combined to stamp out the relics of ancient paganism, which they denounced and furiously branded with the opprobrium of hideous sorcery, until the wretched, half-heathen serfs did actually turn devil worshippers; but the question is, whether in a country that is altogether polytheist, witchcraft is only one out of many forms of what is called the popular religion, or a different species altogether? Was there any plain distinction known among the ancient Greeks, for example, between the slaying of Iphigenia upon the altar at Aulis to obtain a fair wind, and a magical ceremony for the same object? Most people would agree that some distinction has always been recognised, though they might not find it so easy to explain. If we try whether any aid toward a satisfactory explanation is obtained by carefully looking at what goes on before our eyes in India, it seems possible to distinguish a radical separation, from the very outset, between witchcraft and the humblest form of what in India is called religion.

Witchcraft appears to have been, from the beginning, the aboriginal and inveterate antagonist of religion or theology, and hardly less so in the most primeval ages of barbarous superstition than it was in the days of our King James I. It may be supposed to have arisen from an exceedingly dim

and utterly confused glimpse of the secrets of Nature; to have begun with the first notion that such secrets exist, and can be known, and that things which we do not comprehend may be brought to pass without the results being inseparably connected with the divine agency. In the rudest stage of religion, the line between the most abject fetichism—perhaps only the worship of certain queer objects—and witchcraft is very difficult to be traced by us to whom, from the great intervening intellectual distance, both kinds of superstition seem indistinguishable in type and character; yet even in this lowest grade of primitive society their separation is decipherable. One may venture to affirm that the difference between devotees and magicians, between those who propitiate gods, visible or invisible, and those who use mysterious mummery not necessarily addressed to any object or subject at all, exists, and can be verified from the earliest times. As a matter of fact, witchcraft is more feared and more practised by the lowest Indian tribes than by any other classes; and though one does not at first sight perceive how they can discern or point it out to themselves, amid all the monstrous rites and grotesque terrors of their lawful beliefs, yet they always lay their finger upon it without hesitation. There seem always to have been some faint sparks of doubt as to the efficacy of prayer and offerings, and thus as to the limits within which deities can or will interpose in human affairs, combined with embryonic conceptions of the possible capacity of man to control or guide Nature by knowledge and use of her ways, or with some primeval touch of that feeling which now rejects supernatural interference in the order and sequence of physical processes. Side by side with that universal conviction which ascribed to divine volition all effects that could not be accounted for by the simplest experience, and which called them miracles, omens, or signs of the gods, there has always been a remote manifestation of that less submissive spirit which locates within man himself the power of influencing things, and which works vaguely toward the dependence of man on his own faculties for regulating his material surroundings. Those two antagonistic ideas — of dependence on supernatural will and of independence — can, I think, be found to demarcate Witchcraft and Religion, from the Alpha down to the Omega of their long history, which is a chronicle of incessant war, growing fiercer and fiercer as the two forces developed and became organised, and as the two principles diverged and discovered their mutual antipathy. Science had also a stage when it consisted of unreasoning observation, and in the earliest beginning of that stage it must have been very like witchcraft. The man who first hit upon the conditions under which fire can be invariably got by rubbing sticks, probably ceased to pray for fire as he must have prayed when the result was very uncertain; or perhaps the more reverent minds continued to rub and pray, while the bolder and busier men gradually discarded their vows as they became convinced that rubbing was alone effective. But this association of cause and effect, of rubbing sticks with fire, and the like, instead of suggesting the scientific method, only caused the undisciplined savage experimentalist to speculate rashly, to jump at most unwarrantable conclusions, and to connect together things which have no affinity whatever. The imagination of primitive man was limited or steadied by no true reasoning; one consequence was to him just as likely as another. If rubbing a stick produced fire, an utterly amazing result, without the aid of any sacrifice or other invocation of gods, why should not two knives laid crossways on a threshold, or a bit of red string over the lintel of a door, bring down or avert disease? or why should not certain charms carved on the doorpost make the whole house collapse?

All these things are only questions of experiment, and one successful operation goes a long way to establish confidence in the method. If disease has once been stopped by incantation, why not always, or at least usually? Especially if a wise woman has cured an ulcer by applying a few simples, and muttering unknown words, or has averted a hailstorm by hanging up mystic rags and observing the wind, there are no limits to reasonable faith in her. In this manner the first person who picked up a little physical knowledge beyond his fellows was tempted to trade upon it enormously beyond his real capital, because the boundless credulity of his neighbours inspires equal belief in himself, and, if he can do one inexplicable thing, he may be able to do anything else; the peculiarity of his practice being that he does everything without the aid of the gods. And this it is that makes him a Witch as distinguished from the successful propitiator of fetich.

Witchcraft is thus supposed to begin when a savage stumbles upon a few natural effects out of the common run of things, which he finds himself able to work by unvarying rule of thumb. He thence infers that he has in some wonderful way imbibed extra-natural power, while he has only picked up accidentally one or two of the roughest keys which open the outer lid of the physical world. He has hit upon a rudimentary materialism; and while he fancies himself to be entering upon a mysterious department, in which he can do without the popular fetich, he in fact becomes a Fetich unto himself; for he thinks that the virtue lies in his own self (which is partly true), not in the essential conditions of the things which he sees and handles. His characteristic must have been always this, that he *has* some real knowledge, or faint tincture of it; and that, while the vulgar crowd round him ascribe all strange coincidences to the spite or favour of idols and demons, the witch makes bold to dispense with divine intervention, and to rely on his own arbitrary tricks for producing not only a few simple effects which he has verified, but all sorts of absurd exploits which he aims at by mere guesswork, one thing being to him just as probable or improbable as the other. The practice and the pretensions of the sorcerer are very nearly as preposterous as those of the most unsophisticated keeper of idols. Yet the cardinal distinction between the fetich witch and the fetich worshipper is the same as that between the witch and all priesthoods in all times; the former stands aloof from the ordinary adoration of supernatural powers, asking nothing from capricious gods, exercising an art for the most part as blind and irrational as rites performed to a river or a rock, but yet founded upon, and clinging to, the idea that his power lies somewhere within his own control, and is not vouchsafed by the good pleasure of the popular divinity. Fetichism is the adoration of a visible object supposed to possess active power; it ascribes, as Comte says, to all phenomena ideas of vital energy and power drawn from the human type; in short, the fetich (a river, for instance) is a mysterious being whom you try to make friends with, as you would with a man who is plainly too strong to be frightened. But Fetichism also, as Comte further remarks, admits slavishly that man can only hope to influence Nature by worship, not by work; and it sets up an order of specialists in the business of enlisting this irresistible supernatural agency. Whereas witchcraft does, after its dim, blundering fashion, from the very first, stumble away in the contrary direction; in order to avert floods or attract water it does not propitiate the river god, or the running stream; it employs for these purposes some utterly random and senseless ceremony of its own devising, which, nevertheless, might probably be traced back with infinite trouble to some scrap of real knowledge, or traditional observation, or hap-hazard

coincidence. The witch is like a savage who might pick up a lucifer match-box, and should imagine that the power of lighting the matches was peculiar to himself, thence inferring that he was gifted with miraculous powers, and could command the lighting. He is only just superior to his fellows, who would fall down and worship the box.

A witch, therefore, may be thus defined. He is one who professes to work marvels, not through the aid and counsel of the supernatural beings in whom he believes as much as the rest, but by certain occult faculties and devices which he conceives himself to possess. In so far as he does really possess a trifling store of superior skill and useful tricks, he is the *savant* of his time; in so far as he merely pretends and guesses, he is a crazy charlatan. By applying constantly this definition we may reduce into order our ideas of the relative position of witchcraft towards all phases of religion. First, we grasp the real distinction, even in fetichism, between the witch and his brother practitioner upon a fetich, or between the witch and the *Shâman* who rolls about the ground and screams out his oracle; and this line between adoration, inspiration, vows, or oracles, on one side, and thaumaturgy by occult incomprehensible arts on the other side, divides the two professions from bottom to top. Secondly, we see why the said witch is so violently persecuted, even in the earliest times when there is no church to proscribe him, nor morality to denounce his ways. So long as people ascribe to their gods all inexplicable and unforeseen calamities as well as blessings, and so long as every one is allowed to worship his fetich, spirit, or idol, after his own fashion, the cruelties of superstition are confined mainly to barbarous propitiatory sacrifices, in which the victim is sometimes human. If these offerings will not appease the gods, there is nothing else to be done in that direction. But the pretensions of a successful witch suggest the idea that a human being, who is within reach of your hand to seize, wields mysterious power to afflict his fellow-creatures; and this conviction it is which has always caused—indeed in India it still causes—horrid cruelty. While the priest, or fetich-keeper, or oracle-monger, is held in reverence as the ambassador of a power on whom it is hopeless to make war, the witch is always feared, and usually detested; because the priest disclaims all responsibility for the ills inflicted by his angry or malevolent deities, whereas the witch can be made to pay with his person.[1] Moreover, he has also often to pay for all the shortcomings of the popular fetich; since a priest who has the credit of his establishment at stake will usually attribute any failure in the efficacy of prayer, or of vows, to the malignant influence of his natural opponent, the independent witch. Among the aboriginal tribes of India any disappointment in the aid which they are entitled to expect from their gods, to avoid the ravages of disease or famine, throws the people on the scent of witchcraft. It is too discreditable that the idol or demon spirit, after all that has been done for him in attentions and even adulation, should have so broken down and abandoned his worshippers as to let the cholera rage damnably, to keep wives obstinately barren, to permit the rinderpest, or to afflict people with chronic rheumatism. But on the part of the gods their priest is apt to disown these untoward accidents, though he is willing carefully to absorb all blessings; and the people, occasionally directed by priestly advice, fall back on witchcraft

[1] About twenty years ago, in Rajputána, a Brahman established himself as guardian of a curious cleft in a rock, proclaiming that any child who should be passed through it, with the proper rites and fees, would be cured of small-pox, or would be made proof against it. The people brought children from far and near, with the result that more caught the disease than were cured. Among others the child of a powerful landlord died in this way, and the father vowed vengeance against the Brahman, who saved himself by denouncing an old woman as the witch whose spells had defeated his cure. The landlord seized the woman, and tortured her to death.

as the only possible alternative. The thing which torments us (they argue) is inexplicable; the only two possessors of inexplicable powers are gods and witches; the gods can't or won't help us, *argal*, we must help ourselves by a hue-and-cry after the witches. This solution of the puzzle is easier than any speculation as to misfortunes being the outcome of sin, or of some omission of religious duties, or the stain of crimes done in a previous state, or than ascribing them to the anger of some strange divinity; and it is the more popular because it suggests a remedy, as all solid diagnosis of disorder ought to do. If the misfortune were the work of a god who declined to be propitiated, one could only lie flat and adore Setebos who cannot be resisted or punished; but if it is the wicked invention of a magician the sufferer can proceed at once to counteract it by torturing the inventor. Observe that the witches have themselves created the dilemma upon one horn of which they are thus impaled, by assuming powers independent of the gods; for, when a man cannot get what he wants out of a god, he is wont to consult a witch, who usually undertakes to do his bidding, and never confesses that he does not feel equal to dealing with a case. But in proportion to the popular faith in the witch as an ally, must be, of course, the fear of him as an enemy.

Now, it is worth noting that, although among fetichists the simple reason why a witch is persecuted is that he is doing mischief, for otherwise there is no abstract theological objection to him, yet even in fetichism the measures employed against him have a flavour of religion; the gods are called in to act as detectives and judges. It is public opinion that at first indicates the direction in which suspicious scrutiny should be made; the *vox populi* usually names some old woman with a smattering of simples who has attempted to work cures. That particular combination of skill and helplessness presented by a cunning old woman seems to have always suggested some underhand mystery to the untutored mind of the poor Indian, as of the English peasant; and, besides, as has been already remarked, a woman who can cure toothache can produce it, for aught the savage can tell. In individual cases the patient himself, being sick, usually pitches upon his magic persecutor; and, in any instance conjecture is generally justified by consulting the professional witch-finder, who will listen to your evidence and give his authoritative opinion on your case. Prescriptions thus made up are administered by the mob. The accused is seized and subjected to experiments which appear partly intended to make him or her confess, and partly aimed at forcing the witch to break the malignant charm by incessant counter-irritation, until the evil ceases, or the evil-doer dies. There is as yet no exorcism in the proper sense of the word, but these operations are conducted by the light of whatever glimpses of the supernatural may have been vouchsafed to the tribe; the use of sacred weapons against witches is already indispensable. Such weapons are indeed used by primitive man to combat troubles of every sort, and the particular reason for mentioning the fact here is, that it partially explains what at first puzzles an investigator into the witch-finding and witch-punishing business in India, the close resemblance of the practice and methods there in use to those formerly approved by mediæval Europe. The ordeal by water is universal among the barbarous non-Aryan tribes of central India, from the Bheels in the west country to the wild men in the almost unexplored jungles of Bustar and the far east, towards the Bay of Bengal. Here is a description of one water test, taken a few years ago from the mouth of an expert witch-finder among the Bheels, who got into a scrape for applying it to an old woman.

"A bamboo is stuck up in the middle of any piece of water. The accused is taken to it, lays hold of it, and by it descends to the bottom. In the meantime one of the villagers shoots an arrow

from his bow, and another runs to pick it up and bring it back to the place whence it was shot. If the woman is able to remain under the water until this is done she is declared innocent, but if she comes up to breathe before the arrow is returned into the bowman's hand, she is a true witch, and must be swung as such."

In the case from which this account is taken the woman failed in the test, and was accordingly swung to and fro, roped up to a tree, with a bandage of red pepper on her eyes. But it is obvious that this kind of ordeal, like almost all primitive ordeals, is contrived so as to depend for its effect much upon the manner in which it is conducted, whereby the operator's favour becomes worth gaining.[1] A skilful archer will shoot just as far as he chooses. Ordeal by water is the question ordinary, which may probably be construed as an enquiry whether the water spirit will accept or reject the witch, whether he is on her side or against her: and this seems the best general explanation of the original meaning of a world-wide custom. Another ordeal is by heat, as, for instance, the picking of a coin out of burning oil. But the question extraordinary is by swinging on a sacred tree, or by flogging with switches of a particular wood. Swinging before an idol, with a hook through the muscles of the back, is the well-known rite by which a Hindu devotes himself to the god; and flogging with rods from a sacred tree manifestly adds superhuman virtue to the ordinary effect of a vigorous laying on. In 1865, a woman, suspected of bringing cholera into the village, was deliberately beaten to death with rods of the castor-oil tree, which is excellent for purging witchcraft. It is usual also to knock out the front teeth of a notorious witch; the practice appears to be connected with the belief, well known in all countries, that witches assume animal shapes; for in India they are supposed occasionally to transform themselves into wild beasts, a superstition analogous to our European lycanthropy. A good many years ago there was an old man practising as a physician near Srinagar, in the Himalayas, who was notorious as a sorcerer, insomuch that his reputation of having devoured many persons under the form of a tiger cost him most of his teeth, which were extracted by the Rajah who then held that country, so as to render him less formidable during his constant metamorphoses. Shaving the heads of female witches is very common among the tribes much infested by sorcerers; it is employed as an antidote, not merely as a degrading punishment, so that one is tempted to trace its origin to some recondite notion of power residing in the hair; and thus even back towards Samson, to Circe with the beautiful locks, and to the familiar devils of early Christian times, who are said to have had peculiar attachment for women with fine tresses.

Thus the frightful cruelties inflicted on witches by the wild tribes of central India are prompted by the conviction that the power which is causing some exasperating calamity lies in the witch himself, and proceeds out of that human creature, not out of any fetich or intangible demon. And as the evil is not from a god, therefore they use holy gear to extirpate it; but the idea of vindicating the insulted majesty of deities is as yet far off, for the witch is simply a mischievous animal whom you knock on the head as you would a tiger, whenever you have hunted him down. Nor is sorcery yet regarded in the light of treason, for though the votaries of the gods are indeed its ill-wishers, yet this is mainly because it is their business to account for the prevalence of sore

[1] Another mode of trial is by sewing the suspected one in a sack, which is let down into water about three feet deep. If the person inside the sack can get his head above water he is a witch. An English officer once saved a witch in India from ducking to death, by insisting that the witch-finder and the accusers generally should go through precisely the same ordeal which they had prescribed. This idea hit off the crowd's notion of fair play, and the trial was adjourned *sine die* by consent. The ordeal is the primitive judge's method of referring difficult cases to a higher court for decision.

afflictions, and for the incompetence of their gods to apply cure after due supplication. It is therefore convenient to resolve such problems by reference to witchcraft, when all that the gods need do is to disown the accused, or to lend a hand in detecting him, for which objects and reasons the ordeals have been instituted. Sorcery is at this stage not so much an illicit irreligious trade as a wily and sinister art whereby honest men are plagued, being thus esteemed very much as law and lawyer are reckoned by the unlearned vulgar in England and elsewhere. This is, however, its malevolent and uncanny form; on its brighter side witchcraft embodies the primitive mysteries of the art of healing, combining spells with quack medicines, the spell being what the patient mainly relies on. And, as the aboriginal Indian patient expects the incantation to have a precise immediate effect, like a strong drug, so we may perceive the same conception inverted still moving among the peasantry of England, who talk of a dose acting "like a charm"—that is, in a novel and unaccountable manner—while the Indian employs a charm to act like a dose. Neither in England nor in India is there yet any large class of the population which has finally and firmly grasped the conclusion that a dose will act by itself, and that it cannot be in the least aided by any sort of charm or invocation whatsoever, although faith in its efficacy is probably of some real use.

But just as the heavy mist which at dawn covers a primeval forest or waste fen-land may be seen gradually to rise, spread out into lighter haze, and wreathe itself into various fantastic shapes, so in India the dense, low-lying aboriginal fetichism expands and tapers into higher forms. Polytheism then draws closer the broad hem of its sacerdotal phylactery, and shrinks from witchcraft with increasing antipathy. Not yet does the priest abhor or assail the witch; his prejudices carry him little beyond carefully disowning such low practitioners, and relegating sorcery outside the bounds of decent spiritualism, as a college of physicians might separate themselves from a quack. The business manifestly dispenses with the intervention of the great traditional deities, with their embodiments, ministers, rites, and scripture; it is therefore indefensible upon any orthodox scheme of religion, and it is also condemned as in effect disreputable. Moreover, as the religion of a country develops, so also does its witchcraft become modified from its earliest structure, and suffer a change of character. Its essential materialism, always unconscious and hap-hazard, easily accepts a supernatural impression; and among the Hindus proper the tricks of the primitive art or trade get incrusted over by the alluvial deposits of superstitions that are extinct or discarded by the predominant castes and races. Prevailing popular delusions affect even the sorcerer, so to keep up with the times he also must pretend to some backstairs interest with deities; if he is a Hindu he is often patronised by (or patronises) some obscure, ill-conditioned god of the rudest type, who has lost all fashion under the improvement of general religious culture. His craft becomes complicated with the earlier and more discreditable rites of depressed races and superseded liturgies; so that he is less easily distinguishable than at a more simple stage. No ordinary Hindu, however, has any doubt that there is a wide gulf between a witch and a devout person who has imbibed thaumaturgic power, though it is very difficult to hit off the popular definition; and, on the whole, it appears that one must judge of wonder-workers by their fruits, whether they be good or evil. So long as a man possessing inscrutable secrets restricts himself to useful employment of them, such as the detecting of thieves, and the discovering of lost property, he is respected as a kind of preternatural private-enquiry office. When, however, the wise man's art takes a dark hue, and his ways are harmful, then he is at once

stigmatised as a witch, and usually with accurate justice, for the sorcerer will too often be found to have stepped into all the scandalous business which a general advance in religious ethics may prove the gods to have abandoned. So far as he relies on any rites at all, they are connected with the worship of those Helot or outcast tribes which are excluded from the Brahmanical temples; but his whole system escapes the control exercised in practice by public opinion over every openly-professed religion. For these reasons the witch deteriorates rapidly, and descends as polytheism rises. In this stage he is not seriously persecuted by the mob or by the learned; but he holds with all classes a position which a quack of the baser sort still holds in the department of medicine. You go to such an one because he is familiar, and gives himself no airs, does not trouble himself about orthodox forms, or about the morality of means or ends, will do your work cheaply, though perchance dirtily, and will undertake operations that no respectable priest or shrine would agree to bring about by the favour of divinity. He is to be found in the back slums and alleys of superstition and of elementary physics; he dabbles largely in poisons and love philtres; he can bind or loosen the *aiguillette* in a parlous manner; and throughout he mixes up miracles with medicine after a fashion that ends later on by getting him into trouble with both camps. When his simples will not always kill or cure, he ekes them out with hideous mummery; and, when that resource has failed, he has been known to perform, by mere carnal assassination, a contract to rid a man of his enemy. He is more prone than ever to ascribe the credit of his successful cures, not to what he knows or has done, but to his portentous gifts, or to his familiar demons, whereby any rudimentary conceptions of true science are greatly hindered, for every sudden death or skilful cure is instantly set down to magic by the vulgar. The majority of witches are, it must be owned, mere cheats and swindlers; nevertheless they appear to be the unworthy depositaries of whatever small hoard of natural magic may have been painfully secreted during long ages of soul-destroying misrule. They know some optical tricks; and the action of emotions upon the bodily organism, as in mesmerism, has been perceived and practised from very ancient times. In the East, mesmerism is pure magic; in the West it was suspicious charlatanry, until psychical research took up the attentive study of all such mysterious phenomena. Its whole history offers a good illustration of the manner in which a natural phenomenon or supernormal faculty which is obscure, uncommon, and isolated, may first be condemned as sorcery, and afterwards be repudiated as incredible; may be rejected by orthodox science as well as by orthodox religion; and may finally claim re-admission within the scientific domain. It may be conjectured that the reputation of insensibility to pain possessed by witches in India, as well as in Europe, is connected with the well-known anæsthesia produced by the hypnotic trance.

It is difficult to explain, except upon the assumption that ignorant and simple imaginations all range with a very short tether over similar ground, why we find in India the identical old English sorcerer's device of moulding an image of his doomed victim, and piercing it with pins, or wasting it in flame, in sure faith that the person imaged will bleed or pine away simultaneously. But early in this century the life of the Nizam of the Dekhan was attempted by this diabolical invention; and, as the ladies of the harem were said to be at the bottom of the plot, a scandal was caused not unlike that for which the Duchess of Gloucester had to do penance, after conspiring with sorcerers to remove Henry VI. by this very trick of an infernal doll shaped in the likeness of majesty. Not long ago, one partner in a respectable commercial

firm in one of the great Indian cities applied to a reputed sorcerer for his aid in removing another partner; but the sorcerer, who was merely an honest leech, preferred to collude with the threatened partner to cheat the would-be murderer out of heavy fees, the conjurer performing the wax-doll rites, while the victim pretended mysterious ailments and a general sense of vital exhaustion.

The Banjâras of central India, who formerly carried all the grain traffic of the country on vast droves of bullocks, are terribly vexed by witchcraft, to which their wandering and precarious existence especially exposes them in the shape of fever, rheumatism, and dysentery. Solemn enquiries are still held in the wild jungles where these people camp out like gipsies, and many an unlucky hag has been strangled by sentence of their secret tribunals. In difficult cases they consult the most eminent of their spiritual advisers or holy men, who may be within reach; but it is usual, as a proper precaution against mistakes which even learned divines may commit, to buy some trifling article on the road to the consultation, and to try the diviner's faculty by making him guess what it may be, before proceeding to matters of life or death. The saint works himself into a state of demoniac possession, and gasps out some woman's name; she is killed by her nearest relative or allowed to commit suicide, unless indeed her family are able to make it worth the diviner's while to have another fit, and to detect some one else. It is to be remarked that though the witch and the witch-finder are in these transactions both on precisely the same level of darkest and deepest superstition, yet that the two professions are entirely distinct and mutually opposed. The Banjâras are in no sense an aboriginal tribe.

The conclusion here suggested is, therefore, that witchcraft has always been a separate art and calling side by side with the stewardship of divine systems, but apart from it. Also, that the most primitive witchcraft looks very like medicine in an embryonic state; but as no one will give the aboriginal physician any credit for cures or chemical effects produced by simple human knowledge, he is soon forced back into occult and mystic devices which belong neither to religion nor to medicine, but are a ridiculous mixture of both, whence the ordinary kind of witchcraft is generated. Now, its progressive degradation as a science may be measured by the gradual elevation of its two original ingredients, of the religious sentiment, and (much later) of real experimental knowledge. In polytheism it is the relative upward growth of morality, and of popular conceptions of the divine nature, which depresses witchcraft to a lower level of public esteem. A higher idea of the functions of divinity usually coincides with a more restricted idea of their employment; and the notion is soon developed of gods interfering mainly on the side of virtue, except where their own majesty or privileges are concerned, and even then only on important occasions. So soon as men come to presume gods to be incapable of gross injustice, of unprovoked cruelty, or of wanton malice, they impute to the witch every sudden misfortune, like apoplexy or paralysis, that befalls a blameless man or beast. In an earlier intellectual state vicious cruelty is not incompatible with the character of a revengeful or malignant deity who may have been introduced to Hinduism by Brahmanised fetich worshippers; but with the milder polytheism of Hindus proper the practice of using mighty power to do evil ceases to be approved as a god-like characteristic, and thus becomes discreditable; while even to do good the great deities are reluctant to interpose, save when the knot is worthy to be loosed by divine fingers. *De minimis non curant;* they will bestow a victory or a pestilence, but for petty blessing or cursing there is a tendency towards the Epicurean theosophy. Nevertheless, since the peculiar need of the primitive mind is to insist upon a religious or supernatural causation for all

queer, unaccountable facts, insomuch that to such minds the miraculous explanation is, as Grote remarks, the rational one; therefore, the vulgar polytheists still cling obstinately to witchcraft as their easiest interpretation of phenomena for which their inferior gods decline to be responsible, as their readiest source for the remedies which heaven will no longer undertake to provide, and man has not yet tried to discover. The great plagues, like cholera or smallpox, still belong to the gods, who personally inflict and can therefore remove them; but as the nobler Hindu deities rise higher towards the clouds above, and gradually melt away into abstractions, they deign less and less to trouble themselves with trivial grievances or animosities, or to bow down their ear to the lamentation and ancient tale of wrong which comes ever steaming up from the much-enduring tillers of Indian soil. The consequence is that all dirty squabbles, and the criminal side of miraculous business generally, are gradually made over to witches; and the earlier habit of attributing malignant, monkey-like tricks to a god, or of expecting trifling services from him, is discouraged and disowned by the priests as inconsistent with the dignity of their cultus. A man cannot expect a great incarnation of Vishnu to cure his cow, or find his lost purse; nor will public opinion tolerate his going to any respectable temple or shrine with a petition that his neighbour's wife, his ox, or his ass may be smitten with some sore disease. A respectable minister will not be found to take an offering or to use his influence in such silly and scandalous jobs with any saint or deity who values his self-respect.

It must be remembered, also, that the upper sort of polytheistic priest very rapidly hardens down into a mechanical master of ceremonies, the rigid expounder of accredited traditional religion; and that under this process of change he is apt to transfer even his mantic office, the expounding of occasional marvels to astrologers, soothsayers, convulsionists, and the like—a class which in all its branches must be distinguished, in India, from the sorcerers proper. Astrologers, fortune-tellers by sortilege, and interpreters by dreams or omens, all swarm throughout India, but all these watch Nature in order to ascertain the will and intention of the gods, whereas we may define a witch to be one who works independently of them. The witch has originally, I imagine, nothing at all to do with the Mantis, though it is easy to see how they came to be confounded during the first centuries of the Christian era in Europe.

It must not be supposed that even the uppermost gods of Hinduism have retired behind mere ceremonial altars, like constitutional monarchs; on the contrary, all still take active interest in the well-being of their worshippers, some working by laws as loftily as any mortal Indian executive, and are therefore as well worth propitiation. But there seem to be many grades of accessibility among them, from Brahma — who, since he created the world, has taken no further trouble about it, and is naturally rewarded by possessing only one or two out of the million temples to Hindu gods—down to the lowest pettifogging deity, to whom nothing comes amiss by way of a *douceur*. One of this last sort may often be stumbled upon, enshrined in deep jungle, by some lonely cross-road or choked-up well; a low-caste, illiterate hedge-priest presides, who with rough and ready ritual immolates a young pig before a clay image daubed with red paint. The man is a scandal to Hinduism, and only distinct from fetichism because the image probably represents some utterly obscure saint or hero of the spot; but he is not a witch. This hedge-priest serves his god or devil, whereas a witch makes the familiar demon, if one is kept, serve *him*. Now polytheism is so tolerant that it allows a man to apply at discretion to any of its deities, and perhaps he may begin with his suit to the highest class of them, on the principle of always dealing, where

possible, with the heads of departments. But if a man does not get his remedy there, he obviously goes elsewhere. He will generally try some god of local reputation and fair fame; failing these he will resort to miraculous shrines and far-famed places of pilgrimage. Thence he may come down for relief to living men, to ecstatics, ascetics, and saints marvellously gifted or afflicted; or he may take a step even lower, and consult inspired Shâmanists, who inhale the divine afflatus, and deliver their reply in a frenzy:[1] but here he is arriving at the lowest stage of legitimate research into the supernatural. Beyond this line a moral man will not venture in pursuit of his object, if it is one of which he is not ashamed; for if he proceeds further he has left the region of divinity, and has got among the witches. He will only do this if his need be very trifling, such as the cure of a beast or the finding of a coin, or if it be evil, and criminal—saving only the exceptional case when he, being himself manifestly vexed by a witch, is justified according to common opinion in seeking to employ the *lex talionis*. Here begins the black art proper, of which, if we may judge by study of its practices from real life in India, we must own that our ancestors may have had very good reasons for persecuting it, though they proceeded on grounds widely mistaken, and very often against the wrong persons. In any decent condition of society the sorcerers have subsided for the most part to the level of knaves and cheats, religious and medical. Obviously the wide-spread popular detestation of witchcraft was against its evil ways, and a great part of its ill-fame was quite separate from the theologic prejudices against black and white magic indiscriminately, which all Christian communities have very consistently entertained.

[1] These professional convulsionists used to be notorious for oracular powers upon the Malabar coast, where their custom was to work themselves into violent hysterics, when they thundered out curses or prophecies, as the occasion required.

In those books of the Pentateuch which lay down the law for Israel, an emphatic distinction is always maintained between witchcraft and the worship of strange gods. The man or woman that has a familiar spirit, or is a wizard, must be destroyed. And accordingly it is among the Mahomedans that we find, as might be expected, the first distinct expression of religious condemnation of all magic as a sin, because it is treason against God. Sorcery of all kinds is known and incessantly practised. Much business is done in amulets, charms, spells, exorcism, magic mirrors, cabalistic figures, divination, sortilege, and the like; nor do the common people curse a sorcerer unless his dealings or deeds be wicked. The magician of Islam is he who hath power over the genii, or over fairies, and who will cast out devils by magic circles and incantations not known to the orthodox rubric for that end provided, and who is also acquainted with talismans for causing a devil to enter into possession of a man's body. Then there is the minor sorcerer, who helps to captivate women, to discover thieves, or to find out what absent friends are about by the aid of the magic mirror. The magic mirror, so famous in the mediæval romance of Western Europe, whereby an honest crusader often caught most discomforting glimpses of his domestic interior, may have been imported from the East in those ages. It will be remembered that Lane, in his "Modern Egyptians," gives a minute description of this kind of magical feat, and that, in "Eöthen," Mr. Kinglake relates a ludicrous failure by the conjurer whom he desired to summon Dr. Keate, late of Eton. In India the conjurer polishes with some black, oily paste a child's hand; charms are muttered while the child stares steadily at the bright surface, and describes the visions which successively pass across it. It is worth noting that the image of a broom sweeping the ground, which, according to Lane, frightened a young Englishwoman, who allowed the mirror to be prepared in her

hand, appears to be in India also the apparition which the mirror-holder ordinarily begins by describing. There may be something in Lane's remark that the whole process reminds him of animal magnetism.

But all these arts are denounced by rigid Mahomedan divines, especially by the Wahâbi sect, whose distinctive theologic note is great jealousy of any encroachment upon the centralised unity of Divinity. Magic is a higher profession than witchcraft; it is, say the more liberal doctors, a concealed power, which is given to some men for profession and use, just as a sword is a visible instrument which some get hold of and learn to use; and, as with arms, so with magic, the only question should be whether it is employed for good or for ill. If a man devotes himself to the study of these abstruse and powerful arts, he may acquire the thaumaturgic faculty, and may extort obedience from genii, but he must wield his authority for right ends. He may succeed in commanding the evil genii to do him all kinds of wicked service, but then he is practising black, or Satanic, magic. The story of one Shâh Dârval is famous in central India; indeed, it belongs to a kind famous throughout the world—the legend of a man who has obtained possession, usually by chance or trick, of a power which is too strong for him to manage. Shâh Dârval was groom to a great magician of the Michael Scott type, who, lying on his death-bed, felt himself passing away at an hour when all his disciples were absent. The only person who heard the magician's call was this poor horse-boy, who brought him water, so to him did the wizard impart the secret spell, which bound two genii to serve him. But Shâh Dârval could handle his magic no better than the dwarf in Scott's "Lay of the Last Minstrel"; some say he did some awful crime, others that he broke the vow of chastity on which his power depended; anyhow, his genii soon tore him to pieces, and he is a wandering demon to this day.[1] Of course the ordinary moral lesson against abuse of great gifts may be pointed by this legend; but it might also be imagined to be a faint and far-distant reverberation of the despairing voice of some ancient seeker after knowledge, who has caught just a glimpse of what will be known after his time, dying in the dark ages, surrounded by fanatics and poor fools like Shâh Dârval, with the miserable certainty that his few discoveries must perish with him, and that his name will be lost among a crowd of barbarous conjurers.

The stricter doctrines of Islam approach Christianity in their entire condemnation of all curious arts. According to them, magic is designated by a word which literally means partnership, and secondarily a sort of polytheism. As applied to magic, the term may imply the admission of other supernatural beings into partnership with the miraculous powers that are God's attribute; or, with the rigid Unitarians it would mean that the magician himself becomes an apostate and a renegade, by arming himself rebelliously with weapons that belong by prerogative to God alone. And in this latter definition we find again the idea which is the spinal column of witchcraft; for the essence of magic, as distinguished from miracles, in Islam is that it is performed without calling on God's name, and without ascribing to Him glory for the deed, which, if the deed be evil or foolish, cannot of course be done. And so we come round again to our aboriginal definition of witchcraft, that it is a marvellous art, independent of popular theology, and therefore disowned by it in every stage of religious

[1] A similar legend, widely spread over a vast tract of country, is that of Hemar Punt, by some identified with Hemâdri, an authentic physician of the ninth century. He, too, found himself obliged to keep his demons employed, and he set them to build temples with huge stones, without mortar; as Michael Scott set them to make ropes of sand. But the demons finished them all in one night, and their ruins, called by the profane ancient Hindu architecture, are to be seen all over the Dekhan to this day.

belief. Nevertheless, not even among Mahomedans is sorcery really laid under such uncompromising proscription as was imposed upon it by the stern persecution of the old Catholic Church in Europe, which laid so strict an interdict upon all unauthorised wonder-working that even scientific discoveries and harmless tricks were put down as a breach of it.[1] On the contrary, the respectable Indian world in general is of Ralpho's opinion in "Hudibras," that "the Saints have freedom to go to sorcerers if they need 'em," and that by "subtle stratagem" to make use of the Devil for innocent ends is no sin at all. In mediæval Europe the ban of the Church was laid unsparingly upon all secret acts and occult practices as being connected with demon worship, and otherwise contraband. But no one, not even the soundest Mahomedan divine, is bound, for conscience' sake, to molest a witch who has not meddled with him or his.

It is probable that in no other time or country has witchcraft ever been so comfortably practised as it is now in India under British rule. In Europe it has always been either persecuted or ridiculed; and its worst sufferings must have been during that period when the Church insisted that belief in witchcraft was an essential dogma, and stamping it out a primary duty. To disbelieve in its preternatural existence was almost as bad as to practise it, wherefore between the two millstones of hard-set credulity and implacable condemnation the witch was brayed as in a mortar. Now though in India every one believes in witchcraft as a fact, yet there is here no church convinced that scepticism as to such a dangerous moral disease is not only in itself dangerous, but may also be, as Glanvil logically calls it, an insidious sapping of all belief in the supernatural. Thus an Indian sorcerer's countrymen are not bound to prosecute him on religious grounds; while he lives under laws which, instead of condemning him, interfere actively to protect him from molestation, and are much more prone to hanging witch-finders than witches. Of course the witch is punished when he takes to poisoning or pure swindling; but so long as his methods are simply magical—that is, so long as he pretends to work evil in a way not admitted to be physically possible, by sticking pins in a wax figure, brewing in a cauldron, burying a fowl head downwards, howling out incantations, and the like—it is not easy for an English judge to punish the man because he can make his neighbours believe that these operations affect the climate, the cattle, or the health of any one against whom they are directed. The Penal Code does indeed contain one section that might reach witches;[1] a section which, it may be remarked, merely continues the ancient Oriental distinction between black and white magic; for, while it forbids the threatening of evil, it does not prohibit the promise of good, though one can be no more an imposture than the other. In every village of central India they keep a hereditary servant, whose profession is to ward off impending hailstorms by incantations, by consulting the motion of water in certain pots, and by dancing about with a sword. If he threatened to bring down the hail he would be dealt with as a witch by the public, and imprisoned as an intimidator by the magistrate; but as his intentions are beneficent, he is encouraged and supported. In short, witches in British India are exposed to little professional risk except when they are really mischievous; and they are under this special

[1] Tavernier, who visited India in the seventeenth century, relates how, being at an English settlement, he saw that celebrated trick of the Indian jugglers—the causing of a mango-tree to grow from a slip in half an hour. He says that an English minister, who was present, declared that he would refuse the communion to any man who looked on at such devilry, and so broke up the gathering.

[1] Section 508. It punishes the causing a person to do or omit any lawful thing, by inducing him to believe that he will be rendered, by some act of the offender, an object of divine displeasure.

disadvantage only, that the law need not treat them with any of the caution and deference to popular feeling which protect those who claim to practise religious observances, however irrational or indefensible. For while we concede that to menace bodily harm or material mischief by the most absurd devices is clearly punishable, yet we find it more difficult to settle how far we are to take legal notice of threats of divine displeasure issued in the name of recognised divinities, although it may nevertheless show itself, like smallpox, in very substantial form.

Witchcraft is, however, a much more manageable subject for modern governments than other superstitions, because the delusion is more gross and palpable. So long as a witch keeps to white, or even to greyish magic, it would be unfair that an impartial magistracy should prosecute him hastily because he is a bit of an impostor. It should be remembered that even the most grotesque and ridiculous operations of witchcraft, the method of divining the course of a hailstorm by looking at water in a row of pots, for instance, may possibly contain the germ or hidden kernel of some real observation. At any rate, the practice seems more likely to stimulate the spirit of observation and induction than the mere watching of signs and omens, or sacrifices to gods; though Comte believes that these things stimulated early physical enquiry. Chance and strangeness are the very essence of an omen, whereas sorcery pretends to be in some sort an exact science. And from this point of view it might possibly be affirmed that even the poor aboriginal witch of the jungles, with all his sins and disreputable hocus-pocus, is in his time and generation persecuted, like Paracelsus and Cornelius Agrippa, in some slight degree on account of his singularity and of his superior ingenuity, or at least curiosity. He may be making a first step, however stumbling and unconscious, upon a road which may lead him away from abject prostration before the idols and phantasms which overawe his world; or, if he has a devil, it is his own familiar, rather his servant than his master, not the tyrannous hobgoblin that overawes the crowd. He is just touching—though he may only touch and let go—a line of thought which points, albeit vaguely and most crookedly, towards something like mental independence; whereas the worshippers of stocks and stones, of ghosts and demons, are only just setting forth into that interminable labyrinth of speculation as to invisible and supernatural personalities which at last threatens to lead modern Hindus—after ages of wandering over the waste ocean of their theology, in vain pursuit of phantoms and meteors—back again to that despised materialism of which witchcraft may be only the first dim and rudimentary expression.

V

MISSIONARY AND NON-MISSIONARY RELIGIONS

Professor Max Müller's Lecture in Westminster Abbey, December 1873—His classification of religious systems as Missionary and non-Missionary—Remarks on the classification of Brahmanism as non-Missionary, upon the view that, as a proselytising religion, it is not dying or dead — Brahmanism still proselytises in the sense of accepting and admitting members from the outside—Its spread among non-Aryan tribes; examples and illustrations—Its vitality as shown by reforming and purifying movements from within; and as an indigenous religion and social system—Question as to the future of Brahmanism—Whether it can transmute and raise itself in accordance with rising standards of intelligence and morality — Extensive changes will probably be gradual—Present state of Indian polytheism compared with Gibbon's sketch of religion in the Roman Empire—Vitality of Brahmanism—Possible difficulties and hazards of a transitional period under European influences.

In the Lecture delivered by Professor Max Müller in Westminster Abbey on

the day of intercession for missions in December 1873, he counted eight real historical religions of mankind. And the Lecturer went on to say that by study, by critical examination of the sacred books upon which all these religions professed to be founded, they could be classified and compared scientifically. . . . A classification of these systems into non-missionary and missionary religions was directly interesting on that day of intercession for missions, and was also not based on an unimportant or accidental characteristic, but rested on what was the very heart-blood in every system of human faith. Judaism, Brahmanism, and Zoroastrianism were opposed to all missionary enterprise; Buddhism, Mahomedanism, and Christianity were missionary religions from their beginning. . . . The Brahmans never attempted to proselytise those who did not by birth belong to the spiritual aristocracy of their country; their wish was rather to repel intruders, and they even punished those of other creeds who happened to be near enough to hear their prayers, or to see their sacrifices. The Lecturer then compared those religions which had missionary spirit with those "in which any attempt to convince others by argument, to save souls, to bear witness to the truth, is treated with pity and scorn." The former were, he said, alive; the latter were dying or dead. The religion of the Parsees was fast dwindling; Judaism might not so rapidly vanish; but Brahmanism, although still professed by 110 millions, was dying or dead, because it could not stand the light of day. The worship of Siva, of Vishnu, and of the other popular deities, was of the same character as, sometimes more barbarous than, that of Jupiter or Apollo. It might live on, but when a religion had ceased to produce champions, prophets, and martyrs, it had ceased to live, in the true sense of the word; and the decisive battle for the dominion of the world would have to be fought out among the three missionary religions which are alive, Buddhism, Mahomedanism, and Christianity.

It is with great deference that I venture to demur not only to this scientific classification, but also to the conclusions which appear to be mainly drawn from it. It will be allowed that inferences as to the nature and tendency of various existing religions, which are drawn from study and exegetic comparison of their scriptures, must be qualified by actual observation of these religions in their popular form and working effects. And if we look steadily at what is going on around us in Europe and Asia, we may collect numerous facts and symptoms of which the Lecturer does not seem to me to have taken sufficient account. To Professor Max Müller himself the popular side of these religions is, of course, well known; but his lecture, taken alone, seems to encourage the error of presenting an Asiatic religion as a mysterious thing, to be seen only through its ancient books, as through a glass, darkly; and to confirm the inveterate modern habit of assuming all great historic names to represent something definite, symmetrical, and organised—as if Asiatic institutions were capable of being circumscribed by rules or formal definitions. Now, in these days it is so important for us to understand the way of growth and the constitution of a great antique religion; there are so many practical questions connected with beliefs and the historic method of enquiry which become clearer when examined by the light of eastern experiences; and the reflex action of India upon England is so likely to make itself soon felt—that a few words may be worth saying upon those parts of the lecture by which people in England are, in my judgment, liable to be misled.

Brahmanism is enormously the most important of the religions classified in the lecture as non-missionary; the other two have ceased to influence the world: they are now no more than survivals of ancient faiths still preserved by scattered and expatriated races. And the Lecturer,

while admitting that millions still worship the Hindu deities, considers that the national religion in India is in a state of living death, and that for the purpose of "gaining an idea of the issue of the great religious struggle of the future, Brahmanism is dead and gone." Now, it is certain that Brahmanism, being a great polytheism, differs in origin, nature, and mode of growth from a religion that has arisen out of the teaching of its founder or his disciples; the former has spread naturally and unconsciously, like a huge tree, while the latter makes its way by conscious design and systematic exertion, like the higher physical organisms. It is also to be expected that a polytheism, being the most antique existing species of full-grown religions, will, in these days, be the first to decay and subside. But taking things as they are now, and looking upon the actual state and movement of religions in India, an eye-witness would still be justified in affirming that this religion, although powerfully affected by social and political changes so strong and sudden that they would try the constitution of any national creed, is nevertheless not yet dead, nor dying, nor even dangerously ill; and, moreover, that so far from it being a non-missionary religion, in the sense of a religion that admits no proselytes, one might safely aver that more persons in India become every year Brahmanists than all the converts to all the other religions in India put together. The description in the lecture, of Brahmanism as a moribund non-missionary religion, like the faith of the Jews or the Parsees, cannot fail to raise in England an impression quite at variance with the truth. For it must fix in the minds of an English audience the popular notion of an inflexible stationary creed, confined, like a stagnant pool inside a stone basin, within a set of beliefs and customs into which certain Indians are born by the accident that their parents were born in it and practised the ritual duly, but into which no one has for generations entered or is now allowed to enter who was not thus born within the pale. But this, as a definition of Brahmanism, would be only part of the whole truth, and not the part which concerns our present discussion. If by Brahmanism we understand that religion of the Hindus which refers for its orthodoxy to Brahmanic scriptures and tradition, which adores the Brahmanic gods and their incarnations, venerates the cow, observes certain rules of intermarriage and the sharing of food, and which regards the Brahman's presence as necessary to all essential rites, then this religion can hardly be called non-missionary in the sense of stagnation and exclusive immobility, because it still proselytises in two very effective modes.

The first of these modes is the gradual Brahmanising of the aboriginal, non-Aryan, or casteless tribes. The clans and races which inhabit the hill tracts, the outlying uplands, and the uncleared jungle districts of India, are melting into Hinduism all over India by a process much more rapid and effective than individual conversions. Among all these aboriginal or non-Aryan communities a continued social change is going on; they alter their modes of life to suit improved conditions of existence; their languages decay, and they gradually go over to the dominant Aryan rituals. They pass into Brahmanists by a natural upward transition which leads them to adopt the religion of the castes immediately above them in the social scale of the composite population among which they settle down. And we may reasonably guess that this process has been working for centuries, though it is likely to have been much more rapid than ever under British rule. The "ethnical frontier" described in the Annals of Rural Bengal is an ever-breaking shore of primitive beliefs which tumble constantly into the ocean of Brahmanism; and when Sir W. W. Hunter, in his Dissertation on the non-Aryan languages of India, describes the gradations by which the acknowledged

non-Aryans of the highlands slide into low-caste Hindus of the plain, he describes a transmutation that is going on all over India. In central India it has certainly gone very far, with a speed that seems to increase. In the interior of the eastern Himálayas the Buddhists dispute with the Brahmans over the mountain clans and the sparse families that live in the habitable glens; but on the southern slopes, and in the jungles that fringe the bases of the hills, the Brahmans are prevailing unopposed. For all these tribes, by becoming Hindu, come under the Brahmans; and wherever they have succeeded so far as to found a State, as the Goorkhas founded Nepal, they have established the predominancy of caste and creed as a State religion. The number of converts thus added to Brahmanism in the last few generations, especially in this century, must be immense; and if the word proselyte may be used in the sense of one who has come, and who has been readily admitted, not necessarily being one that has been invited or persuaded to come, then Brahmanism might lay claim to be by far the most successful proselytising religion of modern times in India.

Thus Brahmanism is all over India a necessary first stage for the outlying tribes towards Indian civilisation, or admission to the citizenship of the great Hindu community; it very rarely implies any ethical change, or even a formal abandonment of one ritual for another; it is usually a rapid sliding into Hindu customs, and an attempt at social assimilation. But the complete process does necessitate a considerable change of worship and ways of life; for perhaps the surest sign of a family's reception into Brahmanism is, that whereas the Brahman formerly, was never called in, he is latterly found officiating at domestic epochs and ceremonies, of birth, marriage, or death. This implies conformity to Brahmanic rules of eating, intermarriages, and the like, and the evolution of a caste or sub-caste. If the converted family are of standing among their own people, the Brahman, for a consideration proportionate to the emergency or complexity of the case, will usually discover for them a decent Hindu pedigree, or (what is much easier) a miraculous incident, which proves a half savage chief or rich outcasts to be really allied to one of the recognised castes. We know how readily the gods have always intervened to explain away awkward incidents of birth, and to provide a great man of humble origin with a parentage better suited to his success in after-life. Thus the Gond chiefs of the central India highlands all now claim Rajpút ancestry, and have ranked themselves in the soldier caste. In aspiration they are now Hindus of the Hindus, some of them carrying ceremonial refinement to the highest pitch of purism; but nevertheless they are really no better than recent parvenus from the clans which still run almost wild in adjacent hills and forests, and which care nothing for Brahmans or caste prejudices. It is calculated that the Bheels, a tribe widely spread over central India, must have been passing over in large numbers to Brahmanism during the present century. There is a tribe near Ajmere, of whom half were forcibly made Musalmáns, while the other half held its own non-Hindu customs, and until very lately intermarried with its Musalmán kindred; but now this last-mentioned half has Brahmanised, and would no more marry with Musalmáns than the Raja of Benares. Sir George Campbell, in his Report upon his Government of Bengal, in 1871–72, wrote: "It is a great mistake to suppose that the Hindu religion is not proselytising; the system of castes gives room for the introduction of any number of outsiders. So long as people do not interfere with existing castes, they may form a new caste and call themselves Hindus; and the Brahmans are always ready to receive all who will submit to them and pay them. The process of manufacturing Rajpúts from ambitious aborigines goes on before our

eyes." This passage, which the Lecturer has quoted, is one recently recorded observation out of many that might be produced, of the operation of that process which I have called the first mode of Brahmanic propagation. Almost the whole of the great province of Assam, in the north-east of Bengal, conquered and settled by people from across the eastern frontiers of India, supposed to be akin to the Siamese, is said to have become Brahmanised during the last two centuries. It may be granted that people who come in after this fashion do not fulfil the meaning with which the term proselyte is used in describing the operations of a professedly missionary faith, and that Professor Max Müller in his lecture clearly used the term in this, the ordinary European, meaning. Nevertheless, when we undertake to estimate the vitality of a religion, and its capacity for future adaptation and development (without which no religion can endure long), we must consider and take account of growth by agglomeration, as well as of extension by missionary zeal. And it is fair to argue that a religion which still possesses so much power of extension and assimilation as Brahmanism, which has constantly produced, and is continually producing, reformers and revivalists, cannot safely be set out of all calculation in forecasting the religious future of Asia, a problem so prodigiously complex and obscure.

The foregoing extracts and illustrations might be amplified considerably, but they serve to show that the views put forward in this chapter are founded on realities of actual life around us in India. The main consequence of the pacification and settling down of these non-Aryans under British rule has been to encourage their absorption into the Brahmanic ritual; and they are also directly invited to enter in by the Brahmans, to whom come great profit and repute by these additions to the crowd to whom their religious ministry is indispensable. The proselytes are now permitted, by the great favour of the divinity, to enter temple courts formerly tabooed to them, and to make offerings which would previously have been rejected with scorn. Their wives consult holy men who would once have disdained to receive them, and are admitted to the full honour of private interviews; they elect a spiritual director from among the orthodox, and are enrolled among his disciples. They may even bring over their humble deities, and get them properly Brahmanised as incarnations. It should be explained that the spiritual director is often a personage very different from, and morally superior to, the priest of a temple, or the holy guardian of a shrine, dealing with religious questions and the consolation of troubled minds much less entirely in the concrete. All these privileges uplift the hearts of simple folk, and draw them into the great flock of those whose only systematic belief is practically laid down for them by Brahmans.

This is the first of the two modes by which Brahmanism may be said to proselytise—an acceptance of the worship of the outer tribes, invitation to them to come in and conform, assumption of their liturgic and spiritual direction; in short, holding open to them the gates of admission into Brahmanic caste and creed. It might be argued, indeed, that Brahmanism is no clear-cut religion at all, in the scientific sense with which the word is applied to the elaborated theologies of Christianity, of Islam, and even of Buddhism, which have each their founder and central doctrines, are fenced round and staked out dogmatically, with proper gates for lawful entry. And thus it might be contended that no real analogy exists between the spiritual enthusiastic conversions to the Cross or the Crescent and this natural melting down in the crucible of Brahmanism of masses of men as they emerge, intellectually aimless and wandering, out of a half-savage state. It might also be said that a religion which thus, half involuntarily, enlarges its borders, is in no strict sense a missionary religion;

and when Professor Max Müller's lecture is carefully read, it becomes evident that he admits within the class of missionary religions only those which make proselytism an essential and a sacred duty. On the other hand, it seems quite conceivable that an ordinary audience might not have caught this distinction, while no one, I venture to remark, would have inferred from the lecture that Brahmanism has still life and growth, much less that it is spreading, and internally undergoing active changes that may prolong its existence under other forms. And this brings me to the second mode of Brahmanic proselytism, if the word may be used in the sense of admitting and welcoming adherents, who are not actually summoned and urged to join an association.

The second mode by which I should affirm that Brahmanism proselytises is by the working of the devotees and spiritual leaders who found new sects, and set up new lights in divine matters. In a former chapter I have tried to describe, upon a small scale, how these personages have constantly appeared, and still appear, among the Hindus, to assert new inspirations, to insist on a peculiar way of life, to work wonders, and to enrol a body of disciples who gradually convince themselves that their master was a personification of some god. These movements are now going on all over India; some of them increase and take root, others wither and disappear; but it is impossible to describe as non-missionary a religion which permits and largely adopts all this wonderful diversity and intensity of religious propagation. For the Brahmans do not usually reject these sectaries, or disown them, unless their principle is hostility to Brahmanism; on the contrary, the movement is generally adopted and absorbed into Brahmanism. Nor would it be correct to say that these are merely interior variations or changes within Brahmanism itself, and therefore quite different from the spirit of proselytism going forth beyond its own religion to call in the outer Gentiles. Many of these teachers address themselves to every one without distinction of caste or of creed; they preach to low-caste men, and to the aboriginal tribes who are just emerging out of a nomad state into a settled low-caste element; in fact they succeed largely in those ranks of the population which would lean towards Christianity and Mahomedanism if they were not drawn into Brahmanism by some local saint or devotee. I do not assert these religious reforms or revivals are essentially Brahmanic; on the contrary, I think that their aim and first impulse are usually against orthodoxy, monopolies of inspiration, and priestly abuses generally; but this is the origin of every fresh development which any great religion has ever taken; and in surveying the general condition of such a religion one must give it credit for all its vigorous developments, heretical or otherwise. Most of these movements which I am describing in India have issued out of Brahmanism; and hitherto they have almost all ended in it; the leaders are mystics or devout ascetics who spiritualise the idolatry and rude superstition of the vulgar; but they very rarely, except in the famous instances of Buddhism and the Jaina doctrines, carry any large section of the people into any communion permanently separate from Brahmanism. Almost invariably they end by a new Brahmanic caste or sect, with peculiar doctrines and divinities that elevate the low-caste disciple, and satisfy in his spiritual nature just those needs which Christianity or Islam might otherwise have been called in to satisfy. And thus the Brahmanic revivalists at the very least occupy the ground which the more distinctly and consciously proselytising creeds from abroad could otherwise annex, and make wholesale conversions among those classes with whom only are wholesale conversions in these days possible.

For specimens of the second mode we may take the accounts of the Kookas in the Punjab, whose outbreak was rather

sternly repressed in 1872, and of kindred manifestations. The Punjab Report for that year, which in this part of it reads like the letter of some legate addressed to the Emperor from one of the Asiatic provinces of Imperial Rome, sets forth how "Ram Singh, the leader of the sect, a man of considerable ability, was the son of a carpenter, who gradually acquired a reputation of extreme sanctity, and even for the possession of miraculous powers. As his influence and the number of his followers increased, the tendency of his teaching became more political,"[1] etc. etc.; but what first brought this sect into collision with the British Government was their fanatical horror at the slaughter of kine, which led them to murder the butchers, a very fair proof of the strong Brahmanic colouring which pervaded this otherwise spiritual movement, Then we have Hakeem Singh, who listened to the missionaries until he not only accepted the whole Christian dogma, but has conceived himself to be the second embodiment, has proclaimed himself as such, and has summoned the missionaries to acknowledge this latest dispensation. He works miracles, preaches pure morality, but still venerates the cow. In the remote eastern districts of the Central Provinces, which are governed from Nagpore, we may collect minute information regarding the life of one Ghási Dás, an inspired prophet, who sojourned in the wilderness for six months, and then issued forth preaching to the poor and ignorant the creed of the True Name (*Satnám*). He gathered about half a million people together before he died in 1850.' He borrowed his doctrines from the well-known Hindu sect of *Satnámis;* and though he denounced Brahmanic abuses he instituted caste rules of his own, and his successor was murdered, not for heresy, but because he aped the Brahmanic insignia and privileges, which is, of course, a very different thing, according to sacerdotal views, from merely adopting the rules and tenets prescribed by Brahmans. There can be little doubt that this community, if left alone, will relapse into a modified Brahmanism. If it be still contended that these movements are really anti-Brahmanic in their direction and impulse, we have only to point to the Sikhs, who began in just the same manner two or three centuries ago, and whose numbers, after rapidly increasing, are now beginning to diminish. As the Sikhs rise in the political and social world, they are less inclined to separate themselves from the general body of Hindus, though they conform to all rituals in the rough, elastic fashion of warlike men who, like Hector of Troy, cannot be hampered by priests and augurs when there is work to be done. Other illustrations might be given from the history of Hindu schisms; and it might be even affirmed that the only great impulse of religious improvement which carried its followers fairly beyond Brahmanic caste and ritual is Buddhism and its satellite Jainism. The other sects have merely formed separate castes, and have otherwise conformed to the general outline of the Brahmanic system.

Thus, if the word Brahmanism may be taken as the broad denomination of what is recognised by all Hindus as the supreme theological Faculty, and the comprehensive scheme of authoritative tradition to which all minor beliefs are referred for sanction and to be placed properly, we may affirm that this religion, so far from being dead, has increased very considerably within times of which we know. It has drawn in and gathered up the wild tribes and the helots of India; while all the minor sectarian off-shoots have hitherto been gradually bent backward by popular prejudice to conform to it, or else have been obliged to leave India. And while Brahmanism has spread out during the last hundred years, so far as we can guess, it is probable that on Indian ground Islam and Christianity have both been affected, though in different ways, by unfavourable political circumstance. By sheer force,

[1] Punjab Administration Report, 1871–72, p. 412.

by its predominant political influence, and also, of course, by its intrinsic superiority over the indigenous superstitions, Islam made many converts in India up to the beginning of the eighteenth century. There are large Mahomedan communities who were formerly Hindu clans or tribes, having been converted under the Moghul Empire; there was formerly a continuous inflow of Mahomedans from central Asia. Individual conversions are still frequent, but the propagation has lost the support of a powerful State, and its extension has naturally slackened with the rapid decline and dilapidation of the political dominion with which the faith was so closely bound up. It has had now to bear the disadvantage of too near identity with rulership, which forces Islam to stake the authenticity and practical proof of its claim to divine favour upon the success of unstable human institutions. Of course the misfortunes of a Musalmán dynasty ruling over unbelievers must affect the proselytising influence of the doctrines which are held to justify the dominion. With regard to Christianity, its case is in some respects the converse to that of Islam; for there is reason to believe that Christianity has suffered, as to its propagation in India, by the strange success of the Christian conquerors. For a century or more the English have consistently and sincerely disowned all connection between their politics and their religion. Colonel Dow, in his Enquiry into the State of Bengal (1770), observes that persecution for religion is not on the list of the Company's misdeeds, and "he that will consent to part with his property may carry his opinions away with freedom." But no degree of energetic asseveration by a powerful government in India has until very lately been supposed by its subjects to afford any clue to the real intentions of the governors; and so Christianity for many years got all the discredit and jealousy which accompanies the presumption that a State will naturally give aid to the religion which it professes, while in reality no such aid or countenance was given. In the days when Christianity was actually propagated and pushed forward by the whole influence of an European power in India, it did succeed very perceptibly. When Francis Xavier could and did bring the Inquisition to bear upon lukewarm Portuguese Viceroys at Goa, and when whole tribes submitted to conversion on condition of being protected by the Portuguese from the vengeance of their native princes, against whom they had rebelled—in those days Christianity flourished and took root in India; but the English never have resorted to such thorough measures, and of course never will. Thus Christianity was much aided by strong political backing; and it also did very well on its own merits when it had neither political support nor connection; but it has not advanced in India since it has made political connections without gaining their support. And on the whole we may conclude generally that, of the three great religions of India, Brahmanism, has, during the last hundred years, made the largest addition to its numbers; though whether this numerical increase is or is not a deceptive symptom of strength and endurance may be a different question. At any rate, it is good evidence of actual vitality, quite sufficient to warn us against consigning Brahmanism prematurely to the cemetery of dead religions.

But it is not hard to understand why this should be, and why Brahmanism in India is likely to take an unconscionably long time in dying out utterly, instead of being, as might be supposed from a cursory glance at the Lecture, already dead. For, first, Brahmanism is indigenous to India, whereas the other two religions are exotics. Secondly, Brahmanism is a religion of the pre-Christian, old-world type, being neither a State institution, like Islam, nor a great Church or else a congregation of worshippers having a common creed, like

Christianity. It is a way of life in itself, a scheme of living so interwoven into the whole existence and society of those whom it concerns, and placing every natural habit or duty so entirely upon the religious basis as the immediate reason and object of it, that to distinguish in Brahmanism between matters known to us as sacred and profane is almost impossible. This appears to be the earliest form of a religion; and, so far as religion becomes marked off and eliminated out from ordinary civil life as a thing different in use and nature, as a faith concerned mainly with immaterial needs and interests, and with a future existence, by so far may we trace the development, or transformation, of the original religious idea. The terms, layman and ecclesiastic, with all the distinctions thereby implied—indelibility of orders, monopoly of sacred ministry, Church and State existing as independent authorities—are all things which no Brahmanist understands in our European meaning of the words. Professions and privileges are hereditary in Brahmanism, whether they be sacred or profane, but a man's religion means his customary rule of everyday life, whatever that may be. A man is not a Hindu because he inhabits India, or belongs to any particular race or State, but because he is a Brahmanist. His whole status and social identity, the signs by which he may be known and described, belong to his religion.

When, therefore, we say of a religion cast in this type that it is non-missionary, we mean only that it cannot be communicated, or entered, without changing one's whole manner of life and habitual rules of society. And because we, in England, have long ago lost the notion that religion has anything to do with the food we eat, the clothes we wear, or the things we touch, we suppose that a religion thus bound up with a peculiar set of social rules, and resting not upon doctrine, but on custom, birth, and status, must be incommunicable beyond the society into the web of which it is thus woven. That is true, but the society itself extends and absorbs, the peculiar rites and theology following in second place. A tribe or individual becomes Brahmanised by adopting what are held to be the respectable, high-bred manners and prejudices of Brahmanism, and afterward by desire to propitiate gods of a more refined and aristocratic stamp, as well as more powerful, than their rough-hewn jungle deities. Thus a very recent report upon certain wild tracts in northern Madras, which are gradually becoming cultivated and settled, mentions that the aboriginal tribes are taking to infant marriages, and to burning their dead instead of burying. This latter change is a sure sign of Hinduising, more sure than a mere change of gods, for the proselyte is very apt to bring in his gods with him; the Brahman civilises both gods and worshippers, and introduces them into more refined society.

A third reason why Brahmanism is still paramount and spreading in a country like India, particularly among the wild and ignorant, is of a sort too obvious to have been noticed if Brahmanism had not been declared to be dead. It is quite certain that the people of India are, as a mass, still far from reaching that intellectual stage when a revelation or prophetic message may, or must, be thrown back into earlier ages and unfamiliar scenes; wherefore this religion, which is continually and copiously sustained by perpetual miraculous intervention, and which still keeps open its gates to any quantity of new prodigies and new deities, must necessarily prevail for a long time against more spiritual faiths. It is impossible in India to make voluntary conversion of any number perceptible in so vast a population without miraculous gifts, rarely claimed by, but always imputed to, a new teacher or saint. Devotion and asceticism impress because they are found to connote influence with heaven, rather than as ethical examples. Francis Xavier, the one successful modern

missionary of multitudinous Christian conversions in India, was both an ascetic and worker of miracles. He knew well, as Lacordaire says, the main source of success by missionaries to be that strong certitude in their cause which is only attested to simple folk by vigorous self-devotion and incredible labour for no visible reward. It would never have occurred to him that evangelisation could be attempted by any force weaker than spontaneous enthusiasm and emotional power. And it is yet to be seen whether the most conscientious efforts of salaried preachers to do their duty can avail much; or whether a decent middle-class education, such as is now given in the Scotch mission Schools, will prepare heathen folk for embracing the Gospel. Xavier "usually went on foot, and without shoes, living only on roasted rice, which he begged as he went on, and slept on the ground with a stone under his head;"[1] in fact, he lived in India like an Indian ascetic, and, being also an extraordinary character, he soon acquired the fame of wonder-working. He raised a youth from the dead at Travancore, when on the spot a large number were converted; the act was selected with other miracles by the Auditors of the Rota, upon whose report the Bull of canonisation was issued, as resting upon incontrovertible evidence, formally tested and judicially examined.

Therefore, to recapitulate what has just been said, Brahmanism still lives and is propagated in India faster than any other religion, for these three principal reasons, namely:—

That it is indigenous, the produce of the soil and of an environment that still exists.

That it is a social system, and a very elastic one; while the people in India, as a body, still need a religion which, like Brahmanism, provides them with social rules, with laws of custom as well as of conduct.

That it encourages and is nourished by a constant miraculous agency working at full pressure, and by relays of divine embodiments; while, in the present intellectual state of the population of India, no religion will be widely embraced without visible miraculous credentials.

And it may be fairly conjectured that these three characteristics are likely to keep Brahmanism alive in India for several generations to come. No one need doubt that it is gradually becoming purged and refined, but this is a process through which all popular religions pass; and they are not always extinguished by it. The more cruel and indecent rites of Brahmanism have hitherto owed their reformation principally to ordinances of the English police, who have suppressed suicide, self-mutilation, and other unsightly or immodest spectacles. But because Brahmanism has been purged by human statute, it by no means follows that the religion is dying, or even dangerously ill, from what is sometimes thought healthy medicine; and no religion ever possessed greater elements of elasticity or alterative capacities. The worship of Siva and Vishnu is said, and truly, in the lecture, to be still in many cases of a more degraded character than the worship of Jupiter, Apollo, and Minerva. No one knows better than Professor Max Müller the multiform changes which the worship and attributes of the Hindu triad have undergone, or the endless variety of conceptions and personifications under which they have been already adored. And remembering that Vishnu and Siva are only different refractions of the idea of divinity seen through the prism of popular imagination, there appears no reason why they should not go on changing toward a higher evolution as the people emerge out of abject idolatrous terror of their gods. Supposing India to have been left to work out its own destiny as an Asiatic country unconquered by Europe, the

[1] Coleridge, "Life and Letters of S. Francis Xavier," vol. i. p. 161.

process might have been a very long one indeed, starting from the point at which Brahmanism now stands. Under European stimulants it will probably be very much abridged; but there is the religion still flourishing before our eyes like a green bay tree, and one cannot positively affirm that it is likely soon to vanish and be no more seen. That the polytheism may altogether melt away and dissolve in the course of time may be conjectured to be its not improbable destiny. On the other hand, it is not impossible that Brahmanism may be able gradually to spiritualise and centralise its Pantheon, reduce its theology to a compact system, soften down its marvels by symbolisms and interpretations, discard dogmatic extremes, and generally to bring itself into accordance with improved standards of science and intelligence. There is hardly a religion which does not go through this process, or which maintains, without revision, the uncompromising commands or mystic utterances of its founders. And it is a matter of surprise that scientific observers should have recognised the long course of development which other religions undergo, should admit that the religion of Zoroaster and Judaism are still alive, after so many centuries, and such tremendous calamities, and yet should also declare Brahmanism, which provides rites and beliefs to 200 millions, to be dead because its earlier forms (what are sometimes called the coarser conceptions of popular religion) are sloughing off.

"When a religion," said the Lecturer, "has ceased to produce defenders of the faith, prophets, champions, and martyrs, it has ceased to live." This is a bold and far-reaching sentence, which must have sounded through the long-drawn Gothic aisles of Westminster Abbey with a strange echo in the minds of many hearers among the crowd who were assured that, judged by this infallible criterion, Brahmanism was dead, and who may have asked themselves how many religions could stand such a test of vitality. Brahmanism, at any rate, has at this moment many prophets and champions; it has no martyrs, because the British Government not only refuses obstinately to persecute any one, or to let any one persecute his neighbour, but absolutely puts down self-immolation as a public nuisance. Our police drag people from under Jagannâth's car, and fine the whole township if a man kills or mutilates himself. Human sacrifices are still perpetrated under the cloaks of mysterious, unaccountable murders; and there would be plenty of martyrdom if the magistrates would wink at it, but they do not. As for champions, the Kookas belong to our own day, and have sealed their testimony; and there are thousands of tall Rajpúts who would like nothing better than to take up sword and buckler in defence of their patron divinity if exposed to insult, or of any other sacred institution. The prophets and inspired teachers of purified Brahmanism are very numerous; the saints and semi-divine personages still appear; so that, although orthodox Brahmanism may not deserve credit for all these movements, yet any one who surveys India must acknowledge that Brahmanism, tried by this criterion, is decidedly alive.

Now, I have thought it might be worth while thus to enlarge upon what seems to me to be the very premature interment of Brahmanism in Westminster Abbey, because there is no country in the world which can bear comparison with India for the study of that science of religion which the Lecturer announced. No other country contains three great historic religions (of which two are on a vast scale), and has propagated a fourth, the largest of all. Therefore it is probable that on the plains of India, if anywhere in Asia, will be fought out that decisive battle of creeds for the dominion of the world which the lecture predicts. When, therefore, we are told that Brahmanism, which holds these plains in force and strong array, is dead, and that the decisive struggle lies between "the three missionary religions, Buddhism, Mahome-

danism, and Christianity," I own some surprise at this rendering of the actual situation, and at this forecast of the religious future. From the view-point of missionary enterprise it seems a miscalculation of the power and position of the enemy. If, indeed, the victory is to be gained by that kind of missionary activity which is explained to consist in persuading people to abandon small theologic feuds, to drop the galling chains of creeds and distinct formulas, and to rely upon gradual intellectual expansion into the pure morality which the lecture proposes as the real end in view of all reasonable missions, then it might be agreed that Brahmanism is likely to accommodate itself to this operation more easily than sharp-set dogmatic systems. How this end can be consistent with the professed aim of missionary work is not quite plain; nor can one easily perceive how the missionary, who is by his calling a prophet, champion, or martyr (else is his religion dead), can be instructed to go about making himself acceptable to every decent heathen moraliser whom he meets, cheerfully discovering points of agreement, good-naturedly sinking little points of doctrinal difference which breed strife, and keeping somewhat in the background the positive articles of Christian faith. It may be conjectured that the more earnest missionaries will even yet hardly agree with the lecture that the essentials of their religion are not in the creeds but in Love, because missionaries are sent forth to propound scriptures which say clearly that what we believe or disbelieve is literally a burning question. But admitting the pacific solution to be probable, then it will affect all religions equally, and the decisive battle will never be fought at all. On the other hand, if there is to be a great Armageddon of jarring creeds, no battle-field is so likely as India; and those who go to war there must for many a day take Brahmanism into their strategic calculations.

The purport of this essay, therefore, is not to take any share in such a vast speculation as would be the attempt to trace the future course of Asiatic religions, but merely to remonstrate against a scientific forecast which begins by striking Brahmanism out of the calculation. There is nothing in the structure or present state of Brahmanism which need bring final dissolution upon this religion with fatal rapidity, or that need prevent its undergoing the same modifications, mystifications, and spiritual quickening which have preserved other Asiatic religions. Qualified observers have thought that we might at any time witness a great Brahmanic reforming revival in India, if some really gifted and singularly powerful prophet were to arise among the Hindus. Certainly the reform must come soon, for extraordinary political and social changes must always shake violently the fabric of a religion belonging to other times and circumstances. And it is most unsafe to venture even a conjecture as to the form or direction which the inevitable changes in Indian ideas must take, because the situation is so unprecedented; for the effect of suddenly bringing India into full *rapport* with the foremost of European nations cannot be estimated by this generation. We cannot say what may be the result of letting loose upon the country all the ideas and levelling forces which are engendered by a democratic European nation, and which at present tend to substitute a rather cynical utilitarianism for the traditional prestige of capricious kings and priests, and of the gods whom they made in their own image. To these forces Buddhism and Mahomedanism, the religions called missionary, are quite as much exposed as Brahmanism; nor can one perceive why northern Buddhism should not be as much affected externally by observation and experience as the Brahmanic doctrines; while Islam has dangers of its own. Brahmanism must undoubtedly make haste to change its outward features, economise its lavish wonder-working, and concentrate its divine essences; but one would imagine that no religion was ever

better qualified for protecting itself by various transformations, or better fitted with the necessary machinery. Whenever the modern forces come into widely-effective play upon Asia, what chance will Buddhism and Islam have of withstanding them which Brahmanism may not have also? Or what prospect will there be of any great arena being left in which the dominion of the world can be staked as the prize of a tournament among religions clad in the armour and using the weapons of our ancestors? The state and movement of religion in India have always widely influenced the whole of eastern Asia; and, so far as India is concerned, such a tournament is not likely to come off while the country forms part of the British Empire, and continues to learn English. It is far more probable that the masses will for generations remain in a kind of simplified Brahmanism, which will accommodate itself to altered material circumstance and to higher moral notions. The educated and reflective classes can hardly be expected to enter any dogmatic system of faith. Brahmoism, as propagated by its latest expounders, seems to be Unitarianism of an European type, and, so far as one can understand its argument, appears to have no logical stability or *locus standi* between revelation and pure rationalism; it propounds either too much or too little to its hearers. Looking back at the history of such religions, and looking round at the present situation of India, we may well doubt whether for centuries to come any beliefs or deities hostile to Brahmanism will prevail among the masses which inhabit the vast inland provinces, the pagan multitudes that always are so slow to quit their indigenous superstitions, so reluctant to drive forth the parting genius from haunted spring and tangled thicket, and to make "Peor and Baalim forsake their temples dim." That these superstitions will be perpetually toning down, and becoming civilised with the general civilisation of India, is a matter of course; but whether they will be replaced by a complete adoption of any other religion is very questionable, though the great precedent of Christianity in the Roman Empire cannot be disregarded, despite the wide divergencies of ages and circumstances of every kind. The use of historic analogies as a guide to the interpretation of current affairs requires great caution, and Burke says truly that one must avoid treating history as a repertory of cases and precedents for a lawyer. Nevertheless, resemblances—political, social, and religious—between the Roman Empire and British India are incessantly catching the fancy of Anglo-Indians at the present day. The sketch given in Gibbon's second Chapter of the state of religion in the Empire during the second century of the Christian era might be adopted to describe in rapid outline the state of Hinduism at the present day. The tolerant superstition of the people "not confined by the claims of any speculative system"; the "devout polytheist, whom fear, gratitude, and curiosity, a dream or an omen, a singular disorder, or a distant journey, perpetually disposed to multiply the articles of his belief, and to enlarge the list of his protectors"; the "ingenuous youth alike instructed in every school to reject and despise the religion of the multitude"; the philosophic class who "look with indulgence on the errors of the vulgar, diligently practise the ceremonies of their fathers, and devoutly frequent the temples of their gods"; the "magistrates who know and value the advantages of religion as it is connected with civil government"—all these scenes and feelings are represented in India at this moment, though by no means in all parts of India. Seventeen centuries ago the outcome and conclusion of all these things in Europe and Asia Minor was Christianity, which absorbed all the nations of the Empire as they "insensibly melted away into the Roman name and people,"[1] though even in the heart

[1] Gibbon, vol. i. chap. ii.

of the Empire, paganism took five or six centuries to disappear. But history does not repeat itself on so vast a scale; the seasons and the intellectual condition of the modern world, are unfavourable to religious flood-tides; it is incredible that Islam or Buddhism should ever again invade or occupy a great and highly civilised country, and the mind of Europe is turning to other things more exciting in these days than religious proselytism. It may be even doubted whether Brahmanism has to fear destruction at the hands of the three great missionary religions of the lecture, though it is quite possible that more difficult and dangerous experiences than wholesale religious conversion are before India. Little penetration is needed to anticipate the intellectual and moral effects of a state of transition whenever the traditional forms of religious belief shall come to have fallen into universal discredit with the reflective and influential classes, who may have found nothing to substitute for these beliefs but a superficial instruction; while at the same time the rapid advance of prosperity, and the opening of a new world of material needs and allurements, shall have made men restless and discontented. These things may be still far distant in India, where European ideas have as yet touched only the outskirts of our dominion, and and are only appreciated in a kind of second-hand, unreal way by the artificial classes which are politically bound up with the English rule, to which they owe their existence. Nevertheless, our successors may one day be reminded of the picture drawn in the forcible passage which here follows, and which brings this chapter to its conclusion:—

"But epochs sometimes occur, in the course of the existence of a nation, at which the ancient customs of a people are changed, religious belief disturbed, and the spell of tradition broken; while the diffusion of knowledge is yet imperfect, and the civil rights of the community are ill secured, or confined within very narrow limits. The country then assumes a dim and dubious shape in the eyes of the citizens; they no longer behold it in the soil which they inhabit, for that soil is to them a dull inanimate clod; nor in the usages of their forefathers, which they have been taught to look upon as a debasing yoke; nor in religion, for of that they doubt; nor in the laws, which do not originate in their own authority. . . . They entrench themselves within the dull precincts of a narrow egotism. They are emancipated from prejudice, without having acknowledged the empire of reason; they are animated neither by instinctive patriotism nor by thinking patriotism . . . but they have stopped half-way between the two in the midst of confusion and distress."[1] [2]

[1] "Democracy in America," De Tocqueville (Reeve's translation), vol. i. chap. xiv.

[2] The subjoined extract is taken from the preface to "Hinduism" (1874), by the Rev. John Robson, a missionary whose thorough knowledge of the religions of Northern India is incontestable. It was written immediately after the delivery of the lecture in Westminster Abbey, the appearance of the foregoing criticism upon the lecture, and Professor Max Müller's reply to the criticism:—

"A discussion has lately appeared in the pages of the *Fortnightly Review* between Mr. Lyall and Max Müller, on the missionary character and vitality of the Brahmanical religion. It has evidently in a great measure sprung from a misconception of the meaning of the latter in his lecture on "Missionaries," in Westminster Abbey, and might not have been raised had Mr. Lyall seen the lecture in its published form instead of the report in the *Times*. . . . It is perhaps unfortunate that the term Brahmanism should be used, for in its strict sense it means merely the religion of the Brahmans, and is utterly non-expansive. . . . But if we take that system which places the Brahman at the head, but includes also the religion of every caste that may come within its pale, and which may be more appropriately termed Hinduism, then it is expansive, though it is proselytising rather than missionary; and it proselytises by absorbing tribes, not by converting individuals.

"But Hinduism has still great vitality. Max Müller, after describing in his lecture the most popular gods of the Hindu Pantheon, adds: 'But ask any Hindu, who can read, and write, and think, whether they are the gods he believes in, and he will smile at your credulity.' And in his article he says: 'I ask Mr. Lyall, is this true, or is it not?' If he will allow me to answer this question, I would say that perhaps a definition of the word 'think' might remove misconception, but, in so far as I understand his words, and in so far as my experience goes, 'it is not true.' I have met Hindus who could read and write and think, and who soberly, firmly, and acutely maintained their faith in Vishnu and Siva, and even in the efficacy of worshipping their images."

VI

ON THE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE STATE AND RELIGION IN CHINA

I

Difference between earliest and latest ideas on relations between Religion and the State—Controversies in Europe over the question—Separation between religion and civil government is becoming a recognised principle in Europe, while the contrary is still the rule in Asia—Islamitic institutions—Position of the Chinese government, and its method of dealing with the three official religions of China—Confucian, Buddhist, Taouist, all independently established as separate creeds—Public worship of the Chinese, rites performed by Emperor—The contents of the *Pekin Gazette* illustrate the attitude of the Government toward religion, and explain its influence—Posthumous honours and titles bestowed on deceased persons, their deification by order of Government—Titles and reward given to divinities for public services, instances quoted—Control exercised by the State over Buddhist incarnations, cases cited from *Gazette*—Intellectual condition of a people which sees no clear distinction between the unseen and the visible world, between gods and men—Danger of too close connection between Religion and the State.

One important difference between the earlier and the latest principles of government is marked by the changes which have taken place in men's ideas on the subject of the proper relations between the ruler and the priesthood, the State and the Church, the civil government and the ecclesiastical bodies. In times when all authority necessarily claimed to derive from a divine mandate, when laws were supernaturally delivered, and when crimes might be most effectively treated as sins against the gods, it was natural that the ruler should assume religious as well as civil supremacy; that he should take on himself, wherever he could, the visible headship of the external worship; and that he should employ his power to obtain command of spiritual forms and institutions. We know that the Roman Emperors long kept in their own hands the chief pontifical office, until the sacred or hierophantic functions of the sovereign vanished, in Europe, with paganism. We have read of the high paramount authority over religious affairs maintained by Constantine and his immediate successors. Then, in the Middle Ages, came the long struggle between the ecclesiastical and the civil powers; when the Papacy had concentrated and brought into focus all the independent spiritual authority of western Christendom, and declared absolute separation between the dominions of the Church and of the State. But between spiritual and temporal matters, as they affect the daily life and conduct of the people, the distinction is in practice hard to draw, and harder to maintain. The attempt to partition off such things into two provinces, and to place each province under an independent and co-ordinate authority, was inevitably followed by incessant and fervent discussion and contest over the right and recognisable border that should divide two complicated jurisdictions not easily definable.

The course and development of this conflict, which prevailed throughout Europe in various forms, have been very different in different countries: the English Reformation, which restored the Church as a national institution, is a notable instance of the manner in which some of the nations which broke away from Roman Catholicism recurred to the earlier principle of according supremacy to the State's ruler. It may perhaps be said that from the time when the Church attempted to mark off her share in the government of mankind into a separate and independent department, the controversy over the precise range and limits of that department has never ceased. And the general result, in the most civilised countries, is that while the ecclesiastical power has in these latter days been disarmed, and can no longer uphold any pretensions to concurrent authority within the domain of civil administration, on the other hand

the civil power is rapidly withdrawing from its ancient claims to headship and overlordship in matters of belief or ritual. The civil government interferes very reluctantly indeed in questions of doctrine; it still maintains, under such laws as may be existing, what M. Paul Bert, the French Minister, has termed a general police of worship; but the tendency is towards repealing any laws which throw this duty upon the administration. The ruling power no longer looks to the religious bodies, as such, for support; but on the contrary is anxious rather to disown than to rely upon an alliance with any particular form of religion. The view now predominant is that which was set forth in Macaulay's essay on Mr. Gladstone's book on Church and State, where the reviewer argues that a government in its public and collective capacity has no more to do with the profession of dogmatic distinctions than a railway company. In short, politics and theology, finding that they cannot work together, have agreed to stand apart, desiring to have as little to do with each other as may be possible; and upon some compromise of this kind peace is now generally concluded in the most advanced societies, except upon some debatable ground like education. There may still be found in Europe a Church party that would break in the State to the Church's harness, and a political party that would give no quarter to ecclesiasticism; but on the whole it is now becoming an established principle in western Europe, that a complete and formal separation between religion and civil rulership is essential to any rational administration either of the State or of the Church. The temporal sovereigns decline, so far as they can, interposition in spiritual affairs: the only spiritual potentate who still maintains pertinaciously his right to intervene in the temporal government of Christians has been deprived of his own temporalities; and the main current of modern opinion sets towards disestablishment, disendowment, suppressing *budgets des cultes*, cutting the States clear of their connection with Churches, and taking up an attitude, in regard to religious institutions, of irresponsibility and more or less respectful unconcern. So that the earlier ideas on this subject are now not only rejected, but reversed; to the principle of union between the secular and spiritual authorities is succeeding the principle of divorce.

But if it is true that European ideas on the relations between Church and State are reaching this climax, this makes it very well worth while to bear in mind that in the non-Christian world the earlier notions on this subject predominate, and materially influence societies. Three out of the great Governments of Europe—England, France, and Russia—rule over large numbers of non-Christian people, and are in constant relation with non-Christian States. And some of the many and strange difficulties besetting this position are connected with the incident that in Asia and Mahomedan Africa the temporal ruler is generally expected to do what in western Europe he is generally denounced for doing, to assume, that is, a direct and practical authority over the administration of religious affairs; while the statesman is undoubtedly expected to be a worshipping man. Moreover, these difficulties, where Islam is concerned, have not missed appreciation at Constantinople; for the Sultan has lately been disclosing some anxiety about the spiritual unity of Islam, and is showing a disposition to employ his claims to the Kaliphate as a means of taking upon himself the functions left vacant by the disabilities of a non-Mahomedan ruler in Mahomedan countries. And the mere fact that the Turkish Sultans, with no pretensions to sacred character or descent, have for some centuries been able to impose themselves as Kaliphs upon a very large part of the Mahomedan world, proves how closely the spiritual headship is bound up, outside Europe, with temporal dominion. It is, and must be, the policy of a native Asiatic ruler to secure and

maintain this union of forces; since, so long as he stands outside and disconnected from the spiritualities, he is in a dangerously imperfect condition; he leaves in other hands a lever that may be used to upset him, and he is cut off from the control and direction of an active, never-resting machinery, always at work among his people. Of course, an Asiatic sovereign may and does govern people of various creeds, as in India; and it may happen, though the case is rare, that he himself professes exclusively the creed of a minority. But in this latter case (which almost always indicates recent and incomplete conquest) the position of a native ruler is unstable; while, on the other hand, the more effectually he can combine with his secular sovereignty an acknowledged authority over and control over the religious organisation, the stronger and more solid is his dominion. The early Byzantine emperors acted upon this principle; and its most obvious and well-known illustration is to be seen in the rapid rise and the complete predominance for centuries of Mahomedanism as a ruling power throughout the greater part of Asia. For it is manifest that the early successes of Islam were due to the sudden appearance, in a part of the world divided by great schisms or petty local creeds, of a series of leaders who impersonated the full idea of a theocracy, and who united more completely and effectively than ever before or since in the world's history, the two momentous forces of military and religious enthusiasm.

But the institutions of Islam are, after all, barbarous through their very simplicity; while its intolerant monotheism is a peculiar product of western Asia. It may be more interesting to look much further eastward, and to examine the relations of the civil government to religion in a country where creeds and rituals still preserve their primitive multiformity, where they all have, nevertheless, free play, and where the ruler finds it possible and advantageous to preside over all of them. Nowhere is this better seen than in that empire which at one time had attained, as a government, the highest level yet reached by purely Asiatic civilisation, which is the oldest of Asiatic empires, and still not unlikely to outlast all others now existing—the empire of China.

The Chinese Government is singular in Asia as representing a kind of constitutional conservatism. No other great Asiatic State ever got beyond the simplest forms of arbitrary sovereignty; whereas in China the governing class has for centuries been endeavouring to stand still at a remarkably forward stage of administrative organisation long ago attained; and this is not the immobility of mere superstition and ignorance, as in the case of the nations around, but it is apparently due to a deliberate mistrust of progress beyond the point already reached. This feeling is probably much more justifiable in Asia than in Europe; for until the incoherent groups of different races and religions which make up the population of an Asiatic empire become moulded into some sort of national conglomerate, they form a very shifty foundation for elaborate political buildings. A well-knit and long-established European nation may play fast and loose with its institutions, and amuse itself with new economical principles and experiments in governing; may allow chronic disaffection to run on in a province, on the chance of its wearing itself out, and may be indifferent to the encroachment of the legislative upon the executive power, and to the relaxing of the imperial authority. But Asiatic constitutions cannot stand such treatment, and rulers are obliged to be much more cautious in handling rough conglomerate masses of tribes and sects. Nor can it be denied that civilisation, whatever be its benefits to Asia, acts as a disintegrating force among the first principles which lie at the base of all Asiatic governments, where the corner-stone is usually the divine right of kings. However this may be, the Chinese have certainly succeeded in organising scien-

tific methods of administration without disturbing primitive ideas; an experiment of great interest to the English, who have before them a problem not altogether dissimilar.

China has had, moreover, the good fortune of lying beyond the full sweep of the destructive waves of Mahomedan invasion, which spent their force on her extreme frontier; so she escaped the deluge which has separated all western Asia into two distinct periods, and has produced, wherever it spread, a complete interruption of political continuity. And while her religions have thus retained their natural variety, and have escaped being crushed out or overlaid by the levelling power of Islam, China has attained this superiority over India, that she succeeded centuries ago in bringing her religious doctrines and worships into practical co-operation with her secular organisation. It would seem as if the lavish fertility with which Indian soil produces religious ideas and forms has hindered them from being turned to account, and built up into any great religious system; or else that India has never had a native government large and strong enough to organise Brahmanism as a foundation and support of its authority, as the Chinese have enlisted their ancient Pantheon into the State's service; while it does not appear that Indian religions have ever been pressed into the service of morality. The only great State religion and organised Church which ever throve in India was Buddhism; and it is precisely this religion which, after its mysterious break-up in India, found a permanent home, and an immense, though distorted, development as the greatest established religion of China. Yet Buddhism is only one among others, for the Chinese Government seems, perhaps alone among civilised States, to have solved the problem of maintaining simultaneous relations, close and sympathetic, with several established official religions. In European States, wherever uniformity of belief can no longer be preserved, the State usually finds it impossible to identify itself with several rival creeds, and very inconvenient to remain on good terms with one particular creed, whereupon it withdraws as much as possible from connection with any of them. In Mahomedan countries this difficulty is forestalled by diligently stamping out all creeds but one, wherever this is possible. But in China, so far as can be judged from written accounts, the peculiarity is not only that the State is tolerant and fairly impartial to a multiplicity of creeds and worships (for that is seen everywhere in Asia beyond the pale of Islam), but that at least three established religions are fostered and sedulously patronised by the Government according to their specialities and respective values in use for the great purposes of the orderly administration of the empire, and the upholding of the national traditions of conduct and morality. Nowhere is the principle of adapting the motive power of religion to the machinery of administration carried out so scientifically as it appears to be in China. The vast area and the immense population of the Empire afford ample room for several religions; the system of government finds employment and a congenial atmosphere for them all. The tradition of the Imperial Court is to keep the Emperor's person in august and majestic seclusion; the practice is to set out all their administrative proceedings and acts of State under imposing formularies and high-sounding moral ordinances, keeping the inner mechanism of the State secret and mysterious. All this system harmonises with and favours the policy of associating religion with every department of the public service, and of identifying the laws of the Government with the decrees of Heaven. The State interposes itself as much as possible between the people and their gods; the emperor claims to be the authorised *chargé d'affaires*, or chief agent and intercessor for his country with the Supreme Powers. And the Chinese Government has this advantage, that

although its dynasty is to some degree foreign, it is nevertheless not so far ahead of, or apart from, the prevailing intellectual standard among its subjects that it cannot recognise or treat with religions of low and incongruous types without offending the public opinion of some influential body among its subjects. A Christian or Mahomedan Government can at most accord unwilling recognition to creeds of a totally different species. But the Chinese Imperial Government seems able to work with, and to derive support from, at least three great religions of very diverse character: the Confucian system, the Buddhist Church with its Orders, and the Taouist worship of innumerable magic genii and Nature gods.

All accounts of China agree generally in describing these three forms of religion as existing separately and independently, although they have influenced and coloured one another. And if this be their condition (although no one can feel sure of understanding religions who has not been among the people who practise them) it seems certainly remarkable that in China, which possesses an ancient and comparatively uninterrupted civilisation, and a highly centralised government, the various beliefs and worships should not have coalesced, in the course of many centuries, into some comprehensive national religion. Even in India, where the whole country has never fallen under complete political centralisation, and where everything has aided to prevent the regular growth of one religion, all the indigenous rituals and theologic ideas are more or less grouped under the ample canopy of Brahmanism, which has an easy pantheistic method of accommodating all comers. And in other countries some sort of general religion almost invariably develops itself according to circumstances; it selects, rejects, improves, and combines the elements of the various creeds and worships which it gradually supersedes; and the more it predominates, the faster it annexes or absorbs. There may remain formidable schisms or parties worshipping different gods, or widely at variance on points of doctrine, yet one broad band of religious affinity usually brings them all together under some primary denomination. But in China this process does not seem to have taken place; the State is uniform and highly centralised, while there are three principal religions, distinct in character and origin, all living in concord together, and in intimate association with the empire. The different religious ideas and doctrines that have from time to time sprung up in China, or have been transplanted thither, have not become assimilated, but remain apart in separate formations. The philosophic Confucianism, embodying the teachings of a great moralist and statesman, the magnificent hierarchy of Northern Buddhism, with its church, its orders, its deified abstractions, and its metaphysical doctrines; Taouism, with its adoration of stars and spirits presiding over natural phenomena, of personified attributes, divine heroes, local genii, and the whole apparatus of anthropomorphism—all these expressions of deep moral feeling, religious speculation, and superstitious wonder, jumbled together like everything in Asia without regard to inconsistencies or absurdities, seem to prevail and flourish simultaneously in China.

Mr. Edkins, in his book on Religion in China,[1] tells us that we have there these three great national systems working together in harmony. Three modes of worship, he says, and three philosophies, have for ages been interacting on each other. They are found side by side not only in the same locality, but in the belief of the same individuals, for it is a common thing that the same person should conform to all three modes of worship; and the Government willingly follows the same impartial practice. In a country of such ancient

[1] "Religion in China," by Joseph Edkins, D.D.

civilisation one would have expected that what has taken place in other countries during the last two thousand years would have happened to the religions of China—that they would have undergone some process of fusion, and would have been run into the mould of some general type, however loose and incoherent. Of the great historical religions that have arisen in the world, each has annexed several countries; very rarely, if ever, do we find two of them established on equal terms in the same country. It is only in China that we find two mighty religious potentates, such as Confucius and Buddha, reigning with co-ordinate authority over one nation, and their ritual mingled with the adoration of the miscellaneous primitive divinities, who have elsewhere been usually extirpated, subdued, or refined and educated up to the level of the higher and paramount religious conceptions. For, although the Chinese religions seem to have modified each other externally, and to have interchanged some colouring ideas, no kind of amalgamation into one spiritual kingdom appears to have ensued; it is at most a federation of independent faiths united under the secular empire. Whereas in other countries the chief religion is one, but the interpretations of it are many, so that the same faith is a moral system, a mysterious revelation, or a simple form of propitiating the supernatural, in China a man may go to different religions, according to his needs or feelings, for specialities of various sides or phases of belief. Confucianism gives the high intellectual morality, fortified by retrospective adoration of the great and wise teachers of mankind, and based on family affections and duties, but offering no promises to be fulfilled after death, except the hope of posthumous memorial veneration. Buddhism gives metaphysical religion of infinite depth, with its moral precepts enforced by the doctrine of reward or punishment, according to merits or demerits, acting upon the immaterial soul in its passage through numberless stages of existence. It contributes imposing ceremonial observances, the institution of monasticism, and a grand array of images and personified attributes for worship by simple folk who have immediate material needs or grievances. Buddha himself, having passed beyond the circle of sensation, is inaccessible to prayer, yet out of pity for men he has left within the universe certain disciples, who, albeit qualified for Nirvana, have consented to delay for a time their vanishing into nothingness, in order that they may still advise and aid struggling humanity. Both Confucius and Buddha seem rather to have despised than denied the ordinary popular deities, and to have refrained, out of pity for weaker brethren, from open iconoclasm. Taouism has rewarded both these great teachers by apotheosis into a pantheon, which appears to be filled by every imaginable device, by personifications of everything that profits or plagues humanity, of natural phenomena, of human inventions, of war, literature, and commerce, and by the deification of dead heroes and sages, of eminent persons at large, and of every object or recollection that touches men's emotions or passes their understanding. It is worth notice that the three persons who founded these three separate and widely divergent religions appear all to have lived about the same time, in or near the sixth century B.C. And the impartial veneration accorded to them by the Chinese is shown by their being worshipped together, as the Trinity of the Sages.

Let us for a moment see by what means the Chinese Government identifies these religions with the State's administration and with the reigning dynasty. If the Government is of any one particular religion more than another, it is, we are told, Confucianist; since the literary and intellectual sympathies of the official classes are preferentially with a system of moral philosophy and practical wisdom. Nevertheless, the public worship of

Taouist spirits is elaborate and carefully regulated. There are three regular State services during the year, in the spring and at the solstices, while special functions take place upon any great public event, the accession of a new emperor, and victory, or a calamitous visitation. All this is analogous to the religious customs of other countries, with the difference that in China the national prayers and sacrifices are offered up, not by chief priests or ecclesiastics, but by the Emperor himself, who also performs by deputy, through his civil subordinates, similar offices throughout the kingdom. The powers of the air, the great spirits of earth and heaven, are invoked by the State's ruler to administer the elementary forces for the general benefit of the country, precisely as the meanest of his subjects implores some obscure deity to bless or save him individually. The Emperor's style of address to the spirits of Earth and Heaven is lofty. To these two spirits alone he styles himself "subject"; and in making sacrifices to the Earth he offers the following prayer: "I, your subject, son of Heaven by Imperial succession, dare to announce to the Imperial Spirit of the Earth that the time of the summer solstice has arrived, that all things living enjoy the blessing of sustenance, and depend upon it for your efficient aid. You are ranked with Imperial Heaven in the sacrifices now presented." Not less important than the oblation to spirits is the worship of ancestors (prescribed by the injunction of Confucius, but probably an immemorial usage) which the Emperor celebrates with due solemnity, setting forth an example of filial piety, and at the same time claiming for the dynasty all the reverence due to the hereditary father of his people. Three of the greatest of preceding emperors are included, as a special distinction, in the sacrifices to earth and heaven; the rest are annually adored in the imperial Temple of Ancestors. "I dare (the Emperor is made to say, after reciting his pure descent) to announce to my ancestors that I have with care, in this first month of spring, provided sacrificial animals as a testimony of unforgetting thoughtfulness"; and the prayer contains the titles of all the deceased sovereigns addressed. The tablets of all the deceased emperors and empresses are set out in pairs, hymns are sung, and viands and rich garments are offered. There are also minor rituals of the imperial worship of the gods of land and grain, with whom are included, as honoured guests, the deifications of two statesmen celebrated in past times for the promotion of Chinese agriculture. It is manifest that these stately official liturgies, giving elevated expression to popular superstitions, and presenting the sovereign as high steward of the mysteries, must exercise great influence over the devout multitude, and must give the State large control over the religions themselves. But here again the peculiarity is that we see the primitive ideas preserved, exalted and utilised by a cultivated and enlightened Government; not a barbarous or backward Oriental State, but one that makes treaties with Europe, sends out ambassadors, and conducts its affairs upon equal terms with all civilised nations, according to a very distinct and serious policy of its own.

If we desire to understand how, and to what extent the Chinese Government uses its religious position and influence, and brings what may be called its spiritual supremacy to bear upon regular administration, we cannot have better evidence than is contained in the *Peking Gazette*, which has for some years been officially translated into English. This *Gazette* is, to quote from a preface to the volume for 1874, "the daily record of Imperial decrees and rescripts, and of reports or memorials to the throne, together with a brief notice of Imperial and official movements, to which the name of *Peking Gazette* is given by Europeans"; it has an official status, and is circulated to all provincial administrations. If such an institution

as a Gazette were found in any other Asiatic country one could hardly be wrong in taking it to be a very recent importation from Europe; but the Chinese, we are told, were publishing their *Gazette* many centuries ago. It is said to have been first issued in the year 911 of the Christian era, and has been regularly published since 1351 A.D., and is at the present time edited by a committee of six members of the Academy of Han Lin. Not only is it by far the oldest newspaper in the world, but it also is infinitely more instructive and interesting than all other existing official Gazettes taken together. To the student of Oriental statecraft in particular the yellow volumes in which these *Gazettes*, translated into English, are bound up and issued annually, should be of remarkable value. For here, in the formal record of all the important ordinances, ceremonies, proceedings, judgments, opinions, and transactions of the Chinese Government, we can see partially unfolded the working constitution of the greatest native Asiatic empire and the oldest empire in the world; we can follow the movement of the administrative wheels, and obtain a glimpse of the system upon which the machinery is constructed. It becomes thus possible to form some trustworthy conception of the principles that underlie this vast organisation — unquestioned authority; lofty ostentation of public morality; the affectation of profound reverence for churches, rituals, and all things pertaining to divinity; deep respect for tradition and ancestral usage coupled with steady encouragement of classic learning; entire religious toleration conjoined with the peremptory assertion of civil supremacy; provincial home rule controlled, at least in form, by a despotic central executive; in short, the continuous experience of many ages applied to the management by a foreign dynasty of miscellaneous tribes and races, and an immense mixed population. We are shown, of course, only the external aspect of things; we probably see no more than an astute and carefully calculating Government thinks expedient to disclose. And we may assume that nowhere are the *arcana imperii* more strictly withheld, so that the reality may be safely guessed to be very different from the outward published aspect of affairs. Nevertheless, in this ample chronicle of current events and transactions, in the notifications and orders, in their style and their substance, we can recognise a Leviathan government in full play and power, dealing in a masterful and apparently successful fashion with at least one problem that has long troubled the world, and still occasionally perplexes even European statesmen.

The *Peking Gazette* announces all acts of State, regulations, decrees, orders on important cases, and ceremonial proceedings of the Imperial Government; and it is certainly unique among *Moniteurs* and official publications of that kind in its incessant and impressive illustration of the relations of the Chinese State with the established religions. The grand functions of imperial worship are of course all formally ordained and reported for general information by edicts, and by order of the Board of Sacrifices; and the *Gazette* contains many orders allotting to the princes and other high officials the different temples at which they are to do duty. But the strange and interesting phenomenon is to find, in such a modern-sounding publication as a Government *Gazette* and "Court Circular" the deities figuring, not occasionally but very frequently, in every department of official business, and treated much as if they were highly respectable functionaries of a superior order, promoted to some kind of upper house, whose abilities and influence were nevertheless still at the service of the State. Those who hold the first rank, with very extensive departments specially connected with the general administration, are recognised as State gods—such gods as those of war, literature, or instruction having pre-eminent position. There is also, it is understood, a distinc-

tion between the gods who are occupied with the material or physical concerns of the country, and those who preside over intellectual and moral needs. But beside and below these chief office-bearing deities there are evidently very numerous gods of the counties and boroughs, to whom the Imperial edicts secure regular and proper worship, whereby their influence is enlisted upon the side of Government; while the provincial officers are expected regularly to visit all those registered as State gods, much after the fashion in which European prefects are supposed to pay attention to persons of local influence. All these deities seem to be rewarded, decorated, promoted, or publicly thanked by the supreme Government according to their works, with due gravity and impartiality. The God of War, whose department may have increased in importance in these days of great armaments, was judiciously raised, by a decree of the last Emperor but one, to the same rank with Confucius, who had before occupied the first place in the State Pantheon. Constant reference is made in the *Gazettes* to the performances of the minor deities, and they seem to be all co-operating with the prefects or the magistracy in grappling with administrative difficulties, insomuch that local government appears to consist of a coalition between local deities and provincial officers, who divide the responsibility, and share praise or blame. Whatever may be the position of the more privileged and aristocratic class of governing divinities, the minor Chinese deity is not allowed to sit with his hands folded, like Buddha, or to indulge, like the gods of later Hinduism, in grotesque amusements or disreputable caprices, or to decline responsibility for storms and earthquakes, on the plea that such casualties are part of some plan beyond man's present understanding, which will all come right in the end. On the contrary, the condition on which the Chinese Government patronises the Pantheon is evidently that it shall make for morality, support the cause of order, and assist, promptly and efficaciously, in preventing or combating such calamities as floods, famine, or pestilence. And since in China the State deities, at any rate those who represent outlying places and provinces, are not sent to the Pantheon by popular election as elsewhere throughout Asia, but are appointed by the Government, it is obvious that they must be in some degree under ministerial influence. A remarkable personage, whether he be eminent for bravery, virtue, public charity, or any other notable characteristic, may be honoured after death by deification at the hands of the Imperial Court; whereby the State rewards a distinguished public servant or private benefactor, and at the same time retains his interest and goodwill in "another place," and in a higher and broader sphere of usefulness.

To begin with the ordinary and numerous decrees acknowledging the good services of deities. "The Governor-General of the Yellow River," says the *Gazette* of November, 1878, "requests that a tablet may be put up in honour of the river god. He states that during the transmission of relief rice to Honan, whenever difficulties were encountered through shallows, wind, or rain, the river god interposed in the most unmistakable manner, so that the transport of grain went on without hindrance. Order: Let the proper office prepare a tablet for the temple of the river god."

"A memorial board is granted," says the *Gazette* of April, 1880, "to two temples in honour of the god of locusts. On the last appearance of locusts in that province last summer, prayers were offered to this deity with marked success."

February, 1880. A decree ordering the Imperial College of Inscriptions to prepare a tablet to be reverently suspended in the temple of the Sea Dragon at Hoyang, which has manifested its divine interposition in a marked manner in response to prayers for rain. In another *Gazette* the Director-General

of Grain Transports prays that a distinction be granted to the god of winds, who protected the dykes of the Grand Canal; whereupon the Board of Rites is called upon for a report. Also the river god is recommended for protecting a fleet carrying tribute rice; and the god of water gets a new temple by special rescript. In fact, decrees of this kind, which merely convey public recognition of services rendered by the State gods, appear in almost every issue of the *Gazette*.

The following decrees refer to the process of qualification for divine rank:—

"The Governor of Anwhei forwards (November, 1878) a petition from the gentry of Ying Chow, praying that sacrifices may be offered to the late Famine Commissioner in Honan, in the temple already erected to the memory of his father. The father had been Superintendent of the Grain Transport, and had greatly distinguished himself in operations against some rebels. The son had also done excellent service, and the local gentry had heard of his death with great grief. They earnestly pray that sacrifices may be offered to him as well as to his father. Granted."

"A decree issued (May, 1878) sanctioning the recommendation that a temple to Fuh Tsung, a statesman of the Ming dynasty, may be placed on the list of those at which the officials are to offer periodical libations. The spirit of the deceased statesman has manifested itself effectively on several occasions, when rebels have threatened the district town, and has more than once interposed when prayers have been offered for rain."

The *Gazette* of June, 1880, expresses the Imperial regrets at the death of the Commander-in-chief in Chihli, and gives him an obituary notice:—

"He was indeed a brave, loyal, and distinguished officer. During the time he served as Commander-in-Chief he displayed a high capacity for military re-organisation. We have heard the news of his death with profound commiseration; and we command that the posthumous honours assigned by law to a Commander-in-Chief be bestowed on him; that a posthumous title be given him, and that the history of his career be recorded in the State Historiographer's office. We sanction the erection of temples in his honour, at his home in Hunan, and at the scenes of his exploits."

"October 27th. A decree sanctioning the erection of a special temple to a late Commandant of the Forces, who was killed at Tarbajatai."

These last-quoted decrees, selected out of many similar ones, throw much light upon the process of the evolution of deities under State supervision in China. We know that in other countries, notably in India, the army of deities is constantly recruited by the canonisation and apotheosis of great and notorious men; but in other parts of Asia this is usually done by the priests or the people. In China a paternal bureaucracy superintends and manages the distribution of posthumous honours, beginning with honours of much the same kind as those given in Europe to celebrities, and gradually rising through the scale of ancestral worship, sacrifices, temples, and celebration by the public liturgies, to the full honours of recognised and successful divinity. It is easy to perceive how the formal bestowal of posthumous honours, in their first stage not unlike our State funerals and monuments, with memorial tablets, mausolea, and titular distinctions of a sacred character, must attract the religious feelings of the multitude, and stimulate the world-wide propensity towards adoration of the dead. The Government has therefore no difficulty in promoting the spirits of deceased notables to the superior grades of divinity, whenever this may seem expedient; and has only to anticipate and direct public opinion by a judicious selection of qualified personages. In this way the emperor, himself a sacred and semi-divine personage, seems to have gradually acquired something like a monopoly of deification, which he uses as a constitutional prerogative, like the right of creating peers. And the special value in China of posthumous honours is, that they have a natural tendency to qualify the recipients for this higher promotion to the grade of divinity.

The system of posthumous distinctions is not confined to the recognition of eminent services rendered officially, or

in a private capacity, to the public. The State in China occupies itself directly with morality as well as with religion; and any person whose conduct has been meritorious or exemplary may be reported, after death, to the proper board or college, which decrees appropriate marks of approbation. Cases of filial and conjugal devotion are constantly reported by the provincial authorities, also instances of devoted widowhood. There is one example of reward sanctioned to a young lady who died of grief at the death of her betrothed; and another *fiancée* who starved herself to death for the same reason gets posthumous approbation. In all these instances the virtuous deeds of the persons mentioned are solemnly rehearsed by the *Gazettes;* while, on the other hand, the neglect of filial duties is properly stigmatised. In April, 1878, the Censor reports an individual who, besides wearing a button to which he was not entitled, "continued to perform his official duties after his mother's death, and wore no mourning for her."

A distinguished spirit may often obtain further advancement by diligent wonder-working. A decree of 1878 deals with a petition that a girl who died many years earlier may now be formally deified upon the ground that whenever rain has failed, prayers offered up at the shrine of the girl angel have usually been successful. Whereupon an official enquiry is made into the earthly history of this lady; and the report shows that "during her childhood she lived an exemplary life, was guiltless of a smile or any kind of levity, but on the contrary spent the livelong day in doing her duty," refused to marry, and addicted herself to religious exercises. On her death the people built her a temple, and found her very efficacious in seasons of drought. The memorial urges that she has now earned a fair claim to be included in the calendar, and to enjoy the spring and autumn sacrifices. And the Board of Ceremonies, after due deliberation, records this official status.

But the Government not only bestows on deceased persons its marks of posthumous approbation and rank in the State Heaven; it also decorates them with titles. The *Gazette* of May, 1878, contains:—

> "A decree conferring a great title upon the Dragon Spirit of Han Tan Hien, in whose temple is the well in which the iron tablet is deposited. This spirit has from time to time manifested itself in answer to prayer, and has been repeatedly invested with titles of honour. In consequence of this year's drought . . . prayers were again offered up, and the provinces (mentioned) have been visited with sufficient rain. Our gratitude is indeed profound, and we ordain that the Dragon Spirit shall be invested with the additional title of 'the Dragon Spirit of the Sacred Well.'"

Another spirit had already obtained the title of "Moisture-diffusing, beneficial-aid-affording, universal-support-vouchsafing Prince," and receives additional titles in a *Gazette* of 1877. And a decree of an earlier date refers to a request submitted by a provincial governor, recommending that, in consequence of aid given in maintaining certain river embankments by the canonised spirit of a former Governor-General, he be included for worship in the temple of the Four Great Golden Dragon Princes, and that a title of honour be conferred by the Emperor upon this divinity. Apparently the Board of Ceremonies, carefully hoarding its resources for the encouragement of divinities, had admitted the Governor-General's spirit to the Dragon Temple, but had reserved the title "pending further manifestations of divine response." The spirit, thus put on his mettle, acquitted himself so well during the next flood time, that his case was again laid before the Emperor in a fresh report, which gave in detail repeated proofs of the spirit's interposition when the banks were in peril. The case is referred to the Board of Ceremonies "for consideration," December 7th, 1874.

It may be worth while to repeat that in all this system the remarkable feature is not that notoriety in life-time should

lead to posthumous worship and divination, or that a deity should continue to increase in reputation in proportion as prayers to his temple are successful. The point is, that the Government should have thus successfully laid hands on, and systematised, the immense power which is given by the direction and control of that deep-rooted sentiment towards the dead which leads to their adoration, a power that has elsewhere almost invariably passed from the earliest mystery-men to the superior priesthoods, and which the priesthood has usually been able to make its own. If, as Mr. Edkins tells us, the common people believe that the Emperor has the power to appoint the souls of the dead to posts of authority in the invisible world, just as he does in the visible empire, it is manifest that such a prerogative confers illimitable range upon the Imperial authority. Thus the system of posthumous honours and appointments not only harmonises with and satisfies the deepest feelings of the people, but it gives to the Government a hold upon them through their beliefs not altogether unlike the influence which the doctrine of purgatory may have given the Church in the darkest of the Middle Ages. Moreover, the system has this advantage over the European custom of giving peerages and distinctions during life, that it is more prudent and economical. In Europe we honour and reward the posterity of an eminent person; in China they not only honour the man himself after death, but it is well known that they also honour his ancestors, who require no hereditary pensions, and can never discredit their posterity. In December, 1878, we find a provincial governor proposing that, in recognition of the conspicuous charity during a famine displayed by Brigadier-General Chen Ling, he and his ancestors for two generations may have the first rank bestowed on them. Also that memorial arches may be put up to two old ladies, the mothers of high military officers, who have been generous in a similar way. "Granted by rescript. Let the Board take note."

We can understand how it may have been comparatively easy for the State to manipulate and utilise in this way the simple and common superstitions of popular Taouism, giving the humble deities the benefits of official patronage, and honouring the higher deities according to their rank and prestige in the country. Whether seriously or cynically, the Government evidently thinks fit to fall in with and humour the anthropomorphic fancies of its subjects; and the policy is probably a very good one for keeping the gods in hand, and for preventing their concentration into some too powerful a divinity by fostering diversities of worship. The system of civil administration in China is very broadly based upon the principle that the honours and emoluments of the governing body are open to all classes of the people according to merit; and the same principle of *la carrière ouverte aux talents* seems to be applied to the honours obtainable after death. To adapt and utilise for State purposes the worship of ancestors, and the deification of famous men which developed out of this commemoration of ancestral spirits, was no arduous task for a government of literati and philosophers, ruling over a people to whom the difference between life and death, between the phenomenal and the spiritual existence, is far less clear and striking than to modern minds, and is in fact merely shaded off as in the foreground and background of a picture.[1] But it might have been expected that Buddhism, one of the three organised religions of the world, with set doctrines and traditions, with its monastic orders and successive embodiments of spiritual chiefs, would have held even the Chinese Government at arm's length. Against the vagrant and inorganic natural religion the Buddhist Church stands out in strong relief as an organised sacerdotalism, with canonical scripture, monastic orders, an

[1] "The sleeping and the dead
Are but as pictures."—*Macbeth*.

imposing ceremonial, and a good tradition; yet over this Church the State maintains outwardly a strict and imperious superintendence. Buddhism undoubtedly enjoys much independence in China; in Mongolia the Lamas have great political influence; in Tibet itself the Imperial Government allows the Grand Lama to do much as he likes, and the provincial administration is in his hands. It is well known that Tibet, the chief seat and sanctuary of northern Buddhism, is a province governed by the Lamas in political subordination to the Chinese Empire; and the reality of the home rule vested in their priests has been proved by the war which they recently began and waged against British India quite independently of the Pekin Foreign Office. There are many instances in the *Gazettes* of the sedulous care taken by the central Government at Pekin that its political residents at Lhassa shall pay due reverence to Lamaism—that is, to the priesthood representing the dogma of emanations from Buddha, which become incarnate by spiritual succession in the Dalai Lama and other chiefs of the Buddhist hierarchy.

Every succession to the chief offices in this hierarchy is in form simple, the transmigration of a soul: nevertheless every appointment of this nature requires confirmation by the Chinese sovereign. The Dalai Lama, who is co-regent of Tibet, is chosen, as is commonly known, upon each vacancy by the process of discovering the mortal body in whom the spirit of his immediate predecessor, when evicted by death from his former tenement, has taken up its abode. Two or three very young children are produced, whose birth had been accompanied by marvellous sights and sounds, and in whom have been observed signs of preternatural wisdom, and an air of strange unearthly dignity. The records of prodigies and miraculous indications are compared and duly verified by the Imperial Commissioners; the divine intention is also ascertained by casting lots, and finally a report is submitted not unlike the "Relatio" of miracles drawn up by the Roman theologians when a Papal Bull is to issue for the canonisation of a saint.

Then comes, in the *Gazette*, the order for installation.

"Memorial from the Imperial Resident at Lhassa announces that a day has been fixed for the enthronement of the incarnation, and that the High Treasurer has respectfully solicited that the re-embodiment of the thirteenth generation of the Dalai Lama, having now attained the age of four years, and being possessed of extraordinary spirituality and intelligence, the spirits have now been reverently appealed to, and Buddha has been solemnly invoked by genuine and earnest divination. The result has shown that the only superlatively auspicious date is the 31st of July; and on this day it is proposed to go forth to meet the re-embodiment, and bring him to Mount Potala for enthronement."

A decree follows, sanctioning the enthronement and the presentation of the usual gifts; whereupon the Resident reports that the imperial gifts have been placed under a yellow canopy in a certain temple, "where they will be received by the Re-embodiment, kneeling on his knees, and prostrating himself with his face to the Palace in thanks for the Heavenly Bounty."

A *Gazette* of 1874 publishes a despatch from an Imperial Resident in Tibet, reporting his arrangements for proceeding in person, with guard of honour and escorts, to escort the primate of Mongolian Buddhism, who has recently succeeded to his office by embodiment, from Lhassa, where he had appeared in the flesh, to his post at Urga near the Russian frontier, a great distance. And it might well be supposed that an established and richly endowed heirarchy, under a sacred chief who has also large governing powers in his own province, would decline to submit its spiritual operations to the revision and censorship of the State. Yet we have seen that in the matter of the incarnations, the central mystery and essential dogma of northern Buddhism, which

furnishes the process by which all successions to the chief spiritual offices are managed, the Government interferes authoritatively, calls for reports, and issues the most peremptory orders. The *Gazettes* of 1876 contain three decrees illustrating the attitude of the State towards the lords spiritual of Lamaism, who, it should be understood, are also very powerful officials. The published papers begin with abstracts of an official letter from the Resident, or political *chargé d'affaires* on the part of the empire at Lhassa, the capital of the province which enjoys, as has been said, home rule under the hierarchic administration of the Grand Lama. A report had been received by the Tibetan Council that the Dharma Raja, or chief of religious law, had reappeared by metempsychosis in a certain person at a place in Mongolia, where he had been discovered and identified in due form—this being the accepted method by which the priests make their selections for such offices, and maintain the spiritual succession by transmigration of souls. The Tibetan Council reports, after proper enquiry, that this new birth turns out to be the reappearance of a religious chief who had in a former life behaved very badly indeed, and had been degraded for scandalous misconduct. Nevertheless, the Council certifies that the present embodiment is perfectly authentic, and they earnestly implore the Emperor to sanction it, one of the reasons being that in his penultimate life—that is, in the existence preceding the life which he had led so badly—this very person had done good service to the State. They promise that he shall henceforward confine himself to religious practices, and shall not again meddle with worldly affairs.

For the State to deal with such metaphysical processes as these would seem to European administrators a somewhat formidable assumption of authority over things spiritual, involving delicate and somewhat mysterious problems of government. However, on the Tibetan petition there is only a brief order: "Let the Department consider and report to Us." The second decree sets out the report of the Mongolian superintendency, stating that the re-embodiment is perfectly authentic, but showing cause why, for this very reason, it should not be allowed; and repeating that the person who has ventured to come to life again is no other than one Awang, who was degraded and punished for a heinous offence in the year 1845, banished from Tibet, subjected to rigorous surveillance, and placed on the official list of those "from whom the privilege of successive births into the world is withdrawn for ever." His conduct, it appears, had been so intolerably disgraceful that it was ordered that "on his decease, whether this should occur at his place of banishment or at home, he should be for ever forbidden to reappear on earth in human form, as a warning to those who bring disgrace upon the Yellow Church"; and in 1854 he died while under surveillance. Lastly, we have the final orders on the case pronounced by Imperial rescript, upholding the previous sentence, and deciding authoritatively that the re-embodiment is not to be permitted. Obviously the Government has no notion of allowing an offender of this degree to elude surveillance by a temporary retirement into incorporeal existence, or to whitewash himself by the simple subterfuge of a fresh birth. The case seems to have been important, and the decision must have caused some excitement in Lhassa, for vague rumours of trouble caused by an unauthorised incarnation spread as far as India, through the Buddhist monasteries on the Indian slopes of the Himalayan range separating Tibet from Bengal. At a later date, however, the sentence of perpetual exclusion appears to have been commuted on political grounds, for a subsequent decree pronounces that

"We have now received a memorial from the Military Governor of Ili stating that the Tibetan

Lamas, with the chiefs of the tribes (who are willing to provide 1000 horse for the public service), begged that we would allow Awang to become a Lama. We grant him permission to join the priesthood and return to Tibet, there to study the sacred writings, but the request that he shall be recognised as the embodiment of the Nomën Han is refused."

Ili is that province in the far north-west of Mongolia which the Russians for some time occupied, but afterwards restored to China, and this semi-condonation of the spirit's iniquities in a preceding existence is evidently given upon political considerations. The case affords some measure of the vast territorial range of these pretensions to spiritual autocracy, and of their use in strengthening the Imperial influence among the distant border tribes. Not the faintest hesitation on the point of authority can be traced in these decrees: the temporal sovereign deals absolutely with the ghostly chiefs; the embodiments are treated formally as sacred mysteries, and practically as conventional fictions, that are useful under due control; while the publication of all these proceedings in the *Gazette* keeps this aspect of the relations between Church and State well before the people, by whom it is probably appreciated and in form, at least, accepted.

It seems, indeed, that prohibition to reappear is not an uncommon exercise of control by the Government over disorderly Lamas; for, in another case, where a spiritual dignitary had been dismissed, and transmigration interdicted, a lenient view is taken, and the sentence is rescinded on petition of appeal, after the appellant's death (be it noted), at Pekin. "We decree that, as is besought of us, search may be made to discover the child in whose body the soul of the deceased Hucheng has been reborn, and that he be allowed to resume the government of his proper Lamasery." All these proceedings afford evidence of the apparent rigour with which the Imperial Government asserts its supremacy over all matters spiritual; and they are curious as illustrating the little deference paid to religious susceptibilities whenever the public service, or the police of the Empire, or morality generally, is concerned. The Chinese Government surrounds itself with fictions and formulas; it seems to encourage every possible development of superstition, and to let the people be priest-ridden and spirit-ridden to any extent, on the understanding that the State is always master, whether of priests, spirits, or deities. There is nothing unnatural in a despotic ruler wishing to hold this attitude, although it is very rare that he succeeds in doing so; nor is it strange that, as seems to be the case in China, the people, and even the priests, acquiesce thoroughly in the arrangement. All these things are to be explained by the peculiar religious atmosphere of Asia (as once of the whole primitive world), in which forms and fictions are real and yet unreal, familiar and yet mysterious, and where the gods are mixed up with actual everyday life, not separated off from the world of humanity by vast distances of space, or known through traditions of what happened long ago. Where infinite and various supernatural agencies are incessantly abroad upon earth, and at work, it becomes obvious to the practical sense of mankind that unless they submit to some kind of regulation, society can hardly go on; and thus the civil ruler, who is after all immediately responsible for keeping things in order, is allowed some reasonable and reverent latitude in dealing with the national divinities. Some compromise, or concordat, is almost always discovered, whereby a *modus vivendi* is arranged between the spiritual and temporal powers; although, as has been said already, in China it is very striking that the predominance should be so much on the temporal side. But in order to appreciate properly the patronising or (if necessary) unceremonious ways of the Chinese Government towards spiritual or divine manifestations, we have to recollect that a belief or doctrine such as that of transmigration does not usually harden into the consistency of a mysterious dogma, or become the

exclusive property of theology until it has passed far beyond the range of every-day popular experience. So long as these ideas about the gods, or about the re-embodiment of souls, are being actually applied to account for, or to conceal, events and actions that go on all round us, they are subject to the wear and tear of practical life; and they can be, and are, constantly modified to suit varying circumstances and emergencies. While they are in this loose, flexible stage, a strong and shrewd Government can seize the occasion of shaping them to its own purposes. It is clear, indeed, that unless some such control were insisted upon, a Government would be exposed to all kinds of trickery and imposture, such as probably underlies the system of Lamaist embodiment; and could be met at every turn by pretensions to immunity from administrative discipline, based on claims to divine or sacred character. To deny such a character, or to uncover and prosecute the impostors, would shake the whole edifice, and might drag the civil power into controversy between the police and the priests as to the identity of a re-appearance, wherein the police would lose all *locus standi*, being manifestly incompetent to distinguish between true or false divinity, while the position of the priest would be impregnable. So the Chinese prefer to act as if the spiritual or divine character of a *mauvais sujet* should make no difference to the authorities; and the people would probably think much less of a ruler who should take a religion of this kind too seriously, when they themselves are by no means blind to its practical working. Various reverential fictions are occasionally invented to save the reputation of deities or spiritual personages whenever their privileges are being pushed so far, that to yield implicit deference to supernatural manifestations would be clean against plain reason and common sense. Of course any considerable *coup d'état* against factious or obstructive divinities must be a stroke needing great resolution and an eye for the situation, but it can be done, as the Chinese example shows, by a consistently devout and religious Government, when necessary for the preservation of order and the proper conduct of public business.

To modern habits of thought, which conceive a great gulf set, or a blank wall standing, between life and death, between the body and the spirit, the human and the divine, this grotesque intermixture of religion with municipal government, of miracles with police regulations, must appear strange and bewildering. The epigram that was supposed to have been written up over the place in Paris where the convulsionist miracles were suppressed by royal ordinance—

> "De par le roi, défense à Dieu
> De faire miracle en ce lieu—"

reads in European history as a profane jest; but apparently, it might be accepted in earnest, as emanating from proper and uncontested authority, if it were issued on a similar occasion by the Board of Worship or of Ceremonies in China. The fact seems to be that the mass of the Chinese are still in that intellectual period when, in regard to the conditions of their existence, and to the nature of the agencies and influences which surround them, men's ideas are altogether hazy and indefinite. The Emperor lives far away at Pekin, shrouded in semi-divine mystery, making himself heard at intervals by his majestic ordinances, or seen occasionally at high altars in the performance of some stately ceremonial. Between him and his ministers on the one hand, and the gods of heaven and earth on the other hand, there can be to the multitude little or no difference of kind, and not much of degree. Such doctrines as those of transmigration and re-embodiment obviously tend to deepen the cloudy confusion which hangs over the frontier separating the phenomenal from the unseen world. That world is not a bourne whence no traveller returns, but only a stage in the circle of existence, a place where you change forms as

costumes are changed behind scenes, and whence you may come forward again to play a different part in a different character or mode of being, or in a subsequent act of the same drama. And beneath all this stage play of the natural imagination there probably lies the Pantheistic feeling that perceives the substantial identity of divinity with every act and phase of nature with men and spirits indifferently. One can comprehend how a highly-organised State could take firm grasp of all these shifting and anarchic ideas, and retain command over them as a natural incident of supreme rulership, without giving offence to its subjects, indeed with their full approbation. It may be supposed that this position must add immensely to the moral authority of the reigning dynasty; and that, for example, the strange power of veto exercised over re-embodiments must be very useful in a country where ambitious and turbulent characters set up as revivals of precedent gods, or heroes, or prophets. In different forms, indeed, the practice is universal throughout Asia; in Mahomedan countries it constantly shows itself in the expectation of coming prophets or Imams; in India there are continually circulating papers which proclaim the advent of some miraculous personage, with a mission to revive some creed by forming a new and purified government. Nor indeed would any ordinary revolt or disturbance go far unless its leader assumed a religious character, mission, or motive. Even in British India a new embodiment can still give some little trouble, as we have seen not long ago from a newspaper account of an attack made by a new sect upon the Jugunnâth temple. In India the matter was simply one for the police, and the Courts will have kept carefully clear of any opinion as to the spiritual status or antecedents of the sect's leader. Whereas in China the authorities would probably have pronounced the embodiment not false or counterfeit, but simply contraband, and they would have ordered him out of the world back into antenatal gloom, as if he had been a convict returned from beyond seas without proper permission.

Whether the Chinese nation is naturally, or by reason of the teachings of Confucius and the higher Buddhism, more inclined to connect religion with morals than elsewhere in eastern Asia, or whether the Chinese Government, which has undoubtedly realised the enormous value of outward morality to an administration, has really succeeded by persistent supervision in maintaining in all external worships a general show of morality and propriety, it is hardly safe to conjecture. But all observers appear to agree that in China the public practices and the acknowledged principles of religion are decent and ethically tolerable, which is more than can be said for all rites and doctrines in adjacent countries. And it is not difficult to see how the Buddhist dogma of promotion by merit through various stages of existence must have worked in with the system of open competition for official employ, which in China binds up all classes of the people so closely with the State's administration. So also the systems of re-embodiment and deification serve to keep up the prestige and dignity of the Great Pure dynasty, for the Emperors of previous dynasties are not only worshipped as gods, but they may reappear and reign again, occasionally, in the person of later sovereigns, thus attesting the divine right and the true succession of the present family. On the other hand, all these devices for identifying the Government with the prevailing religion have one weak side: a religion may fall, and by its fall may drag down the dynasty. How dangerous to the empire may be a religious uprising founded on a principle that escapes from or rejects the traditional State control, was proved some forty years ago by the Taiping insurrection, which is stated by all accounts to have derived its religious character and fervour from the misunderstood teachings of Christian missionaries. The enthusiasm of the

new sect at once took a political form, and the leader credited himself with a divine mission to seize temporal dominion, according to the invariable law of such movements in Asia, whereby the conqueror always claims religious authority, and the religious enthusiast declares himself ordained for political conquest. The whole atmosphere became rapidly charged with fanatic energy of a type more characteristic of western than of eastern Asia. Tai Ping, the leader, denounced idolatry, condemned the Taouist and Buddhist superstition, and proclaimed fire and sword not only against the creeds, but against the dynasties that encouraged them. Probably nothing is more perilous to a Government that has incorporated the elder and milder religions into its system, and has soothed them and lulled them into tame and subordinate officialism, than an assault upon those very religions by a wild and ardent faith suddenly blazing up in the midst of them. The fabric of conservative government is threatened at its base; the more it has leant upon the old creeds the greater its risk of falling; and this is evidently the vulnerable point of the whole principle of using religion as bulwarks to the State. A great ruler, like Constantine, may have the address and foresight to save his government by going over to the winning side in time, but this has been rare in all ages and countries; while in Asia strong religious unheavals still shatter dynasties and subvert empires.

II

Spiritual and temporal jurisdiction—In China both exercised by State — Examples from *Gazette*—Official superintendence of divine affairs—Contraband wonder-working—Fabrication of legends—Emperor's spiritual prerogative confers canonisation, sanctions apotheosis, controls both existences—Migration of souls — Trances, temporary disembodiment—Relations of State with polytheistic religion—Definition of Piety—Propitiation — General administration of popular worship—Concluding remarks.

In Europe the relations of a State to religion have been usually determined only after much conflict over the issues involved; the balance of power has taken many centuries to adjust. We have seen that in western Asia, the position was fixed by Islam, that is, by intolerant uniformity; and that in India political anarchy and a wondrous confusion in things divine were prevailing, when the English came in to solve the question by cutting off all connection with spiritualities. We have also shown that in China the civil power still holds a third and very different course; it not only tolerates all religions equally, but has placed them all under its own direct jurisdiction; the Emperor is supreme Pontiff as well as supreme Governor. Here we may see verified the saying of Hobbes, that the religion of the Gentiles is a part of their polity, and nowhere has his principles found stronger illustration than in the practice of the Chinese Government. "Temporal and spiritual," said Hobbes, "are but two words brought into the world to make men see double and to mistake their lawful sovereign"; an error that would be very speedily corrected by the Board of Worship at Pekin. Taking for its constitutional theory the political philosophy of the Leviathan, the natural subordination, as by God's law, of the ghostly powers to the visible sovereignty, profound contempt for the popular superstitions disguised under an imposing display of external respect for all forms of religion, we can arrive at some conception of the attitude of the Chinese Government towards the complex problem of according an equally reverent recognition to a variety of discordant beliefs and worships.

It has been observed that the gradual differentiation between spiritual and temporal jurisdictions has usually been accompanied by a corresponding growth of the notions of a distinction between matters of religion and worldly affairs, and of the belief in a future existence entirely apart from this present life. But in polytheistic societies, no such

clear divisions are found to prevail; the deities are present everywhere, interfere upon all important occasions of every-day life, are concerned in the success or failure of all human exertion, and the tour of man through phenomenal existence is personally conducted by divine agency. All notions regarding the origin and meaning of spiritual things are fluid and arbitrary; there are no fixed creeds or exclusive articles of belief which may be set against, and may claim to supersede, the commands of an earthly ruler. A politic Government may evidently find its advantage in upholding this state of things, which prevents the establishment of a jurisdiction over which the priests, rather than the prefects, can assert their claim; and, accordingly, the Chinese governing class, whose members are usually philosophic Confucians, appear much concerned to preserve undiminished the close connection between the nature, actions, and motives of gods and men which is a characteristic of early religion.

The official *Gazette* deals indifferently with science and theology, with public instruction and superstitious usages, with the latest European inventions and the most primitive forms of worship. Rules for competitive examinations and the conferment of educational degrees alternate in the regulations for sacrifice and orders for the deification of local worthies; high civil and military officers are promoted and decorated with equal gravity in life or after death; the establishment of free schools, the launching of steamships, irrigation works, post roads, legal decisions, the appointment of Imperial concubines, appear in company with orders touching the propitiation of ghosts, the worship of spirits, the canonisation of notables, and the promotion of efficacious divinities. We find decrees awarding incense sticks to river gods, tablets and titles to wonder-working shrines, prescribing the ritual for allegorical and heroic deities, and for those who preside over State departments, natural forces, or human duties, over War, Wind, or Patriotism. The frequent references to ancestor worship and the offerings to the dead, show the universality of these aboriginal customs; the decrees regulating the incarnation of the Buddhist Lamas recognise officially the great mystery of the transmigration of souls. From the commixture of human with divine duties and actions, works and ways, reflected by these miscellaneous notifications, we may plainly discern the ways of a Government which draws no fine metaphysical distinctions, and which takes the important superintendence and authoritative direction of all beliefs and worships, the humblest as well as the highest, to be an important department of Imperial administration. Nor need we go back to a classical dictionary, or collect from all parts of the outlying world, the grotesque fancies and practices of savage tribes, as evidence and examples of the connection between primitive and posterior forms of natural religion. We have here the chief stages and steps in religious evolution officially recorded and authenticated: we see the civil power dispassionately patronising the whole series of beliefs and institutions, on the sole condition of retaining supreme authority over all of them.

In making, from this point of view, the selection of a few out of many notifications in the *Gazettes* of later years, we may begin with a report that illustrates the widespread notion, which lies at the root of all ghost worship, that the spirits of those who, after death, are left without the proper obsequies must be laid at rest by propitiation. This belief may be supposed to be as old as the time when men first began to bury, burn, or otherwise dispose of their dead kinsfolk or companions; and in China, where the wandering ghosts and hungry demons are innumerable, it is probably one of the original ideas out of which had been developed the paramount importance attached to the rites of sepulture. The present example is

furnished by an incident of the French war against China in 1884.

The Military High Commissioner at Canton writes, that in the recent campaign on the Tonquin frontier, a terrible pestilence broke out among the troops, who were obliged to live in holes dug in the ground in order to avoid the large shells that burst over them. From ten to twenty thousand men died, and were "laid in flocks like sheep" in great pits.

"The memorialist would venture to remark that the soldiers in question, who were doing their duty in the ranks of battle, and went forth on distant service with their lances on their shoulders, were the victims of a malignant poison, and died one after another, phantom fires playing over their lonely graves in a distant land into which their bones were thrown. The officers and men returning from Tonquin, as they passed through Kuangsi, were unanimous in asserting that the cries of the ghosts of their dead men could be heard in the still watches of a cloudy night. Although their case may differ from that of soldiers killed in battle, they nevertheless 'gave their lives for their country, and are therefore certain of a place in his Majesty's compassionate heart.'"

In these circumstances it is proposed to require the regimental commanding officers to send up a list of all those who perished in this way, so that they may share in the compassionate distinction already accorded to the soldiers who were killed in action. It is added that their omission has caused a feeling of disappointment in the army generally; and possibly the report may be substantially little more than a recommendation in favour of commemorating those who died on service with those who were killed in action; but the reason stated is the necessity of appeasing unhonoured ghosts. A subsequent *Gazette* announces that the Commander-in-Chief in Hunan has allotted the rent of lands towards defraying the cost of periodical rites performed to the memory of men who fought and died under his command. He himself has never allowed the anniversary to pass without sacrificing to the spirits of his departed companions-in-arms.

In this context may perhaps be placed, as relating to military hygiene, a decree exhibiting the Imperial concern for the health as well as for the spirits of the Chinese army. The decree reviews and commends a report of measures taken to chastise certain rebels in Hainan, confers upon the general, as a special decoration, a white jade thumb-ring and a dagger hilted with jade, and concludes thus:—

"In view of the pestilential character of the country, as described by the Governor-General, in which operations are being carried on, her Majesty the Empress has been pleased to order that ten boxes of the pills known as *p'ing an tan*, or the pill of peace and tranquillity, which have been prepared for Imperial use, be bestowed on the officers and men of the force. These pills will be distributed by General Feng Tzutai, who will proclaim the Imperial will to the army under his command."

But since ten pill-boxes would scarcely go far against epidemic sickness among troops serving in unhealthy districts, it may be conjectured that her Majesty relied principally upon the honorific or possibly miraculous effects to be anticipated from this benevolent issue of medicine from her private dispensary.

If demon worship develops out of the fear of malignant ghosts, the following extract carries us a little further along the connecting line of superstitious usages. A memorial from the Governor of Formosa describes an outburst of pestilence in the island, where the savage tribes, who suffered severely from the disease, "endeavoured, according to their ordinary custom, to avert it by putting people to death." The victims were Chinese; their heads were exposed in front of the houses of the murderers; and these outrages became so frequent in parts of the island as to be suppressed only after a petty war. Here we have one of the earliest forms of sacrifice and expiation representing the belief, which seems to be indigenous among all primitive societies, that some virulent plague, like the smallpox in India, is the literal embodiment of the wrath of an offended demon, who goes about like a wild beast seeking what he may devour, and whose

hunger must be satiated by victims. In a later stage of the same belief we have the formal human sacrifice, when the victim is offered up according to settled ritual or custom. But the simple random killing of the first comer seems in the beginning to be sufficient; for in certain parts of India a mysterious and apparently aimless murder may be occasionally explained as the fulfilment of a secret vow to one of the fiercer divinities. From the expiatory assassinations of the Formosa savages, and from the universal Chinese practice of leaving out food to appease a ghost's hunger, up to the annual offerings and libations made by the Chinese emperors, the sacrificial feasting and commemorative sharing of food, one may venture to trace, in long succession, the genealogy and gradual refinement of a natural religious idea. That the plain unvarnished worship of ghosts, demons, and animals may be traced upward to the higher forms of anthropomorphic religion is a well-known and well-evidenced theory, supported by the survival in the latest stages of some incongruous habit or function obviously belonging to the earlier conceptions. A curious article in the *Gazette* seems to indicate that in China, as elsewhere, a man may be duly divinised according to advanced spiritual notions, while he retains a denominative or symbolic name that probably points backward to some anterior adoration of him under an animal form.

The Governor-General at Foochow reports receipt of a petition with regard to a temple erected to the honour of one Kô Chang Kêng, canonised as the "White Divine One," whose Taouist synonym is the White Jade Toad.

"This individual was born in the Sung dynasty, and was skilled in literature and the art of medicine. In 1881 he was found responsive to prayer, and on application to his Majesty he was invested by Imperial decree with the title of Divine Aider. Last year a long drought prevailed in the province, but after gatherings for prayer had taken place at his temple a bountiful rain was vouchsafed. The petitioners crave from his Majesty the bestowal of a votive tablet upon this saint, together with an additional title, and the enrolment of his name on the list of worthies to whose manes sacrifice is offered."

The prayer is granted by decree; and thus, if any conjecture may be hazarded upon the indications afforded by such passages in the *Gazette*, the White Jade Toad of Taouism mounts higher in the order of divinities, becoming identified with a saint, assuming new titles and attributes that tend to disguise a humble or merely symbolic origin, and gradually dissolving connection with an obscure and somewhat ill-favoured animal. The toad is understood to owe his early honours to his reputed power of living for centuries, and to the miraculous qualities which he thereby acquires. The Frog god of China is known to be the symbolical impersonation, by an easy association of ideas, of Rain. It is clear that divine animals often become entangled in many accidental and arbitrary ways with legendary men; and since the fancies and queer incidents out of which fables shoot up among primitive folk are endless, any single explanation of animal worship must be utterly inadequate. One can only say that it is characteristic of the primitive races of man to feel an instinctive affinity with the creatures around them; their strong belief in the interchangeability of shape and habits between man and other animals may almost be thought to come from a kind of reminiscence of a common origin and cousinhood. Their minds accept no sheer division between monkeys and men, or between the manners of a bear and of some rude hunter clothed in a bearskin; nor, in fact, is there anything in the savage mode of living that denotes unquestionably the superiority of man over the higher beasts in strength or sagacity. And as the absence of a clear dividing line between men and gods favoured the myths of divine ancestry (which indeed mean in China only that the ancestor has been duly divinised), so this sense of kinship with other creatures, of being a part of all that one beholds, has probably engendered most of the

vague traditions of animal descent. Any accident or apparition would convert this floating impression into the realisation of the presence of a familiar spirit in some animals; while the very common belief that the souls of living as well as dead persons transfer themselves frequently into animal bodies, may account for many of the complex worships and some of the mythical descents. But in China the various shapes and significations of popular religion appear to be singularly complicated and interfused. The intelligent Chinese layman is understood to define his ordinary attitude towards the religions of his country by explaining that, not being a priest, he belongs personally to none of them, so that he may consult impartially any saint or god, shrine or temple, whose response may be expected to remedy his grievance or fulfil his desire. Nor do the divine persons or emblems remain attached to a single liturgy; they are occasionally found crossing over into another rite, when they take higher or lower attributes and metamorphoses according to the particular cult or conception implied, representing different religious constituencies according to their positions. For idolatry is only the hieroglyphic writ large, in popular character; it came because unlettered man carves in sticks and stones his rude and simple imagination of a god; and this manner of expressing the notion by handiwork continues among even highly intellectual societies, until at last the idea becomes too subtle and sublime to be rendered by any medium except the written or spoken word.

It is obvious, however, that at a period when the productive forces of natural religion are in full vigour, a Government which tolerates and even encourages a fantastic polytheism — undertaking only to regulate its practical operation, to run the spiritual electricity along manageable wires—must maintain strict watch over the manufacture and circulation of marvels, and upon pretenders to supernatural energy. The *Gazette* furnishes frequent examples of very vigorous dealing with unauthorised religious movements, such as are apt to breed tumults and sedition in all times and countries, particularly where the deities take an active part in all human enterprise. A bureaucracy which identifies the supernatural element so closely with administration must be prepared to find supernaturalism meddling with politics, and cannot afford to overlook the efflorescence of disorderly enthusiasm. According to Hobbes, the "feare of power invisible, feigned by the mind or imagined from tales publiquely allowed, is Religion; not allowed, Superstition." And "he that presumes to break the Law upon his own or another's dream or pretended Vision, or upon other fancy of the power of Invisible Spirits than is permitted by the Commonwealth, leaveth the Law of Nature, which is a certain offence, and followeth the imagery of his own or another private man's brain." These somewhat cynical maxims of the Leviathan have assuredly been adopted as guiding principles by the philosophic rulers at Pekin, where short and summary ways are taken against the disturbers, upon any such pretext, of public order.

"A memorial from the Governor of Kneichow reports the capture in that province, of the chief of a seditious gang, and his execution. He was by trade a carpenter, who picked up in a ruined temple a mutilated book of incantations, and set up as a healer of diseases by the recitation of charms. He placed in his room a bowl of pure water, before which he engaged in worship, morning and evening, and further took to himself twelve disciples, who used to join him in daily worship. Having imbued these disciples with a number of theories, and told them false stories which they took to be true, he ordered them each to take to themselves twelve other disciples, that these might again augment their numbers, and raise a large following. Eventually it was decided to organise a rising, but before the movement could be well matured it came to the notice of the authorities"—

who executed the unfortunate carpenter on the spot, leaving it doubtful whether the story of the intended rising was not invented as an excuse for getting rid of an enthusiast.

But in 1887 a religious impostor succeeded in stirring up an actual outbreak, which was put down by troops after a fight in which the leader of the insurgents was taken and immediately decapitated. From the subsequent examination of some prisoners before the Judical Commissioners it appeared

"that Chao, the Ogre, as he styled himself, had persuaded his followers that he was gifted with supernatural powers, and was in affinity with the spirit of a certain mountain. He told them that he could make fighting men and horses out of paper, and that he possessed a charm which, if eaten, would enable the partaker to do without food."

The enquiry closed with the decapitation of the witnesses as soon as their statements had been recorded; and although the Imperial decree commends highly the promptitude of the local authorities, yet to those versed in the methods of Oriental officialism this remarkable alacrity in taking off heads suggests an uneasy suspicion that some tangible grievance, or maladministration, lay at the bottom of the commotion.

"The Governor-General of Chihli reports that, in obedience to Imperial edict, he has succeeded in capturing certain members of a heterodox sect, who have been in the habit of worshipping an imaginary being, and unsettling the public mind by other superstitious observances. The ringleaders of the sect, when examined, stated that their society was divided into four branches, named after the four cardinal points, and met together four times a year for worship. Nothing beyond this could be established against the sect. . . . The two ringleaders have been sentenced, according to the law on subject, to be sent to Urumtsi as slaves to the soldiery, the rest to punishments less severe."

In the condition of the public mind, when the unbounded credulity of a vast population has to be humoured and yet to be controlled, a prudent Government will look closely to the promulgation of the laws against contraband wonder-working. The *Gazette* publishes a memorial from a member of the Court of Censors, referring to the laws enacted by the present Imperial dynasty in severe prohibition of supernatural stories intended to delude the masses, and interdicting "the fabrication of heterodox and strange wonders by a vicious priesthood for the bewilderment of simple folk." His Majesty's attention is then drawn to a great assemblage of men and women that is held at a certain temple, where it is given out that the genii gather together, and where women sit at night in the corners of the building in order to see fairies. All this, the memorialist declares, is clean against faith and morals; and he asks "how, in the centre of enlightenment and civilisation, can such doings be tolerated?" Upon this a decree issues, condemning and prohibiting them.

"The fabrication of legends by the Buddhist and Taouist priesthood for the beguilement of the multitude, as well as the admission of women into the temple for the purpose of burning incense, are alike prohibited by law."

Returning to the orthodox views and practices, we may observe that the general aim and tendency of the *Gazette* notices is toward enlisting the divine influences on the side of public utility and public morals. If plagues and earthquakes occur, they are part of Heaven's design, to be interpreted by reference to human sins and shortcomings. The Censor of the Fakien circuit, reporting on the casualties caused by a recent earthquake, shapes his conclusions upon the system of a *savant* of the Han dynasty, who, in explaining the operations of the five elements, traced all physical calamities to the actions of men. The Censor adopts this theory as reasonable and probable seeing that ever since the Taiping rebellion frequent calamities have visited the empire, and in spite of the constant Imperial exhortations, few of his Majesty's servants honestly do their duty. Of late years there has been so much especial laxity in the province recently afflicted, that the reporter cannot avoid suggesting this remissness of the executive as a probable cause of the disaster. One might have

supposed that of all sublunary ills an earthquake would be most difficult to bring home to the account of a government, unless it should be taken to indicate defective grasp of the situation, and a certain degree of ministerial vacillation. Yet the Chinese *Gazette* finds in this incident an excellent occasion for reading the people a moral lesson against disaffection; so that between the caprice of the gods, and the iniquities of men in this and previous existences, the share of responsibility for national misfortunes to be eventually accepted by the temporal ruler may be considerably reduced.

What, then, is the system upon which this immense structure of supreme authority in all departments has been built up and is maintained? In the Chinese Government the temporal and spiritual powers, instead of leaning toward different centres, meet and support each other like an arch, of which the Emperor's civil and sacred prerogative is the keystone. The Emperor is himself the Son of Heaven; he performs the highest sacrifices as Pontiff for the nation; and official hierarchy includes the chief Buddhist and Taouist ecclesiastics, graduated according to spiritual rank and attributes. The head of the Taouist priesthood is the Heavenly Master, in whose person the spirit of one of the earliest Tao mystics has its official residence. According to M. de Groot, this High Priest from time to time revises the list of urban and municipal deities, striking out those whom he thinks fit to remove, and usually filling up the vacancies by the promotion of mandarins recently deceased. But these changes are all submitted for precedent sanction to the Board of Worship.

"Tous les ans le pape communique au ministêre la liste des mutations qu'il se propose de faire dans le personnel divin; et ce n'est qu'après avoir été nanti de la confirmation ministérielle de ses décisions qu'il porte celles-ci à la connaissance des autorités provinciales."

These urban gods are, it should be explained, neither more nor less than divinised men: they represent the post-mortem promotion of distinguished officials to the rank of tutelary deities; they are clothed in official dress, and are all in a manner subordinate to the spiritual Lord Mayor at Pekin. They are consulted by the local judges, who pass the night in their temple for meditation over a peculiarly difficult case; and the importance of these functionaries is in no wise diminished by their death, for the urban god acts as agent, or *chargé d'affaires*, within his municipality for the God of Hell, to whom all misdeeds are by him regularly reported. It is also his duty to arrest and despatch guilty souls to their appointed place of punishment below. A similar organisation presides over the village community, where one of the more venerated elders is first revered as an ancestor, and imperceptibly takes rank on the spiritual Board of Guardians. And just as these powerful local divinities virtually hold office at the State's pleasure, so also the Lamaist representatives of Buddhism depend for recognition of their successive embodiments upon the Imperial mandate, or *congé d'élire*.

We can now understand how this unexampled position of the Imperial Government enables it to exercise such formal and deliberate control, through the Board of Censors, over disorderly spiritualism, and all undesirable manifestations of superstitious reverence for the dead. A decree, passed upon a protest by the Censors against certain sacrificial honours that had been unduly paid to a deceased magistrate, points out that these honours necessarily imply official recognition of public merit, and directs that no application for them be transmitted until the claims of the dead man shall have been carefully verified. And another decree publishes a long report in which the Board of Ceremonies make their recommendations as to the limitations to be placed upon the canonisation of deceased officials. They find, after consulting the dynastic institutions, that the erection of special temples in

honour of defunct worthies is the peculiar prerogative of the Throne, and that the privilege of doing worship to provincial officers within their own (late) jurisdiction was extended to the provinces by a recent Order in Council, having formerly been confined to the metropolis. Various suggestions follow regarding the class and kind of distinction to be conferred in ordinary cases, with special rules as to persons killed in battle, or in resisting seditious revolts; so that one almost begins to doubt whether, after all, the Chinese system of posthumous honours differs greatly, except in outward form and treatment, from the pantheons, mausolea, epitaphs, and statuary memorials so common in Europe. But in the Western world these things have now become purely commemorative; nor—

"Can honour's voice provoke the silent dust,
Or flattery soothe the dull cold ear of death;"

whereas, in China, the images, the tablets, the annual offerings of flowers, the *Gazette* notifications, are actually intended, according to their popular meaning, for the gratification of illustrious spirits, and to conciliate them by compliments. But as worship and wonder-working react upon and stimulate each other, the promotion of a notable spirit to be a demigod, and thence to the full rank of a divinity in charge of some great human interest, is found to be a simple matter of notoriety, popular credit, and Court favour.

The meritorious official appears, indeed, in the *Gazette* nearly as often after death as before, with little change of duty or even of character; since the fact of titles and decorations being still showered upon him indicates that even by putting off this mortal body one does not always become perfectly incorruptible. The special commissioner for the survey of the Yellow River writes that "the deceased high officers who have been canonised as saints of the river have appeared in different shapes on the water's surface at times of imminent danger from its rise." While one particular breach was under repair, a deceased worthy, named Pai Ma Chiang, was constantly present; and at a critical moment, when the embankment was giving way, he calmed down the flood by a most timely apparition, whereby he has justly merited an additional title, "in recognition of his services to mankind." Another memorial claims honorary titles for a spirit who guarded the fields from a swarm of locusts; while a famous virgin, who served in the army, like Joan of Arc, and died in great honour, is reported for decoration, on the ground of having twice (since her death) saved a fort that was besieged by rebels. There is also a decree conferring honours on the original discoverers of a salt spring, who had for centuries become the tutelary deities of the locality, and who are now officially recognised. And we have numerous edicts prescribing ritual, and insisting on the decorous and exact performance of the periodical sacrifices.

"En Chine, donc, un dieu est l'âme d'un mort, qui au lieu de ne recevoir les hommages que des descendants du défunt, reçoit des honneurs et des offrandes de la nation entiere ou d'une partie considérable de la nation, avec la sanction du grand prêtre de l'empire."[1]

This is no place for the theory adopted by Euhemerus, which was also positively affirmed by the Christian apologists who stood face to face with heathendom, that all the gods of polytheism were divinised men. The sources of superstitious phantasy are innumerable, fortuitous, and in the highest degree variable; nevertheless the Euhemeristic hypothesis does seem to gain ground into the extension of accurate enquiry. In India it is largely supported by direct observation, while in China it is not only corroborated by ample evidence, but is officially attested. We find there the earliest and latest stages of deification joined in a connected series; we have at the bottom the universal worship of ghosts, partly ancestral and commemor-

[1] De Groot, ii. 657.

ative, and in part propitiatory, while at the top we have the full-blown adoration of some of the loftiest deities who preside over the operations of nature or the interests of man. No one contests the authentic descent, either of the ghost or of the god, from the common stock of humanity. The biographies of the ancient personages who have now become the God of War and the Goddess of the Seas, two deities of the first rank in the Chinese Pantheon, are said to be on record in the public archives; there appears to be no more doubt as to their human antecedents than as to the identity of the mandarin who died last year with the urban deity in whom his spirit now resides. The deities generally are no less historical than the saints of a European calendar, than St. Denis, St. Dunstan, or St. Thomas of Canterbury; and their earthly origin seems in no way to affect their popular reputation.

But since in China the right of canonisation and the conferment of all celestial honours are retained by the State in its own hands, neither sanctity nor even deification appears to have acquired for its possessors any political independence. And the foregoing extracts from the *Gazette*, which might easily be multiplied, show the vigilant solicitude with which the Imperial Government upholds its prerogative of supremacy and strict superintendence over polytheism in all its branches. This system stands out in strong contrast against the modern Occidental principle, which we have imported into India, of complete dissociation between the Government and the religion of its subjects. For a thorough-going philosophical exposition of the Chinese theory of government we must go back to the Leviathan, where the position is that all power rests ultimately in the sovereign, who decides in all disputes, and must be obeyed by his subjects in every conceivable case. "The points of doctrine concerning the kingdom of God have no great influence in the kingdom of Man, are not to be determined but by them that under God have the sovereign power." Where this is accepted universally, a State need not trouble itself to enforce religious uniformity, because no difference of opinion or multiplicity of worship under public sanction can put the country's peace into jeopardy, while in the multitude of divinities there is safety. And according to Chinese statecraft, the proper way of maintaining this supreme appellate power is not by ignoring impartially all creeds, but by impartially professing them all; whereby those difficulties are avoided which have been much felt among European governments in countries that still possess a single Established Church. Between the view that a government has no concern with any particular form of religion, and the Chinese principle, that a government should belong to all religions in order to rule them all, the two opposite poles of theory on the subject are well staked out; and both theories are the fruit of intellectual indifference. Whatever may be said against deliberate official encouragement of popular superstitions, it has been asserted by those who know the country's history that the religious policy of China has at least been successful in preventing religious wars, intolerant outbreaks and any virulent conflict of sectarian animosities, so long as it has had to deal only with the tolerant natural religions. But wherever it has been confronted by an energetic proselytising Faith, like Christianity or Islam, this conciliatory policy has inevitably failed. The Christian missions have brought China into continual trouble with European Powers; while in south-western China the Panthay Mahomedans, and in the north-west the Turkestani tribes, have raised violent revolts that were only quelled by merciless severity.

There can be little doubt that this system of bringing both the living and the dead, men, ghosts, and gods, equally within the Imperial prerogative must help to confirm and perpetuate that fusion and intermixture of human and divine

affairs, the indistinctness of the dividing line between the two spheres of existence, to which reference has already been made. A recent English writer has ingeniously twisted certain Scriptural expressions and metaphors into a chain of evidence to support a hypothesis of natural law in the spiritual world, which would square very well, in many respects, with the popular Chinese notion of the subjection of spirits to human statute. For it is also a Chinese notion that the law of visible nature extends to the world of spirits, and if the Imperial ordinances do not actually run in the realms below, they have, at any rate, to be obeyed by all who desire to revisit the upper regions. And one obvious consequence of being incessantly under such a dispensation, in such an environment, is, that many of the Chinese myths and fables bear an administrative character, and are founded on the fancy, serious or sarcastic, of a Plutonic bureaucracy and a well-organised official system in Hades. Some years ago Mr. H. Giles brought out, under the title of "Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio," a translation of the most popular story-book in China. It opens with a tale headed "Examination for the Post of Guardian Angel," relating how a graduate having been mysteriously summoned before a board of examining deities, apparently presided over by the God of War, was appointed Guardian Angel in Hunan. As this was equivalent to promotion into the next world, because the qualification for angelship is Death, he pleaded hard for a respite, and was allowed to adjourn joining his post for nine years; whereupon he awoke as out of a trance, tarried nine years longer in life, and passed away quietly at the appointed time. There is also an odd tale of a man whose degree was gained for him by a ghost; and another of certain literati who were sent for by Yen Lo, the ruler of Hades, to compose an inscription for a tower that he had erected there, and who showed no alacrity in obeying this euphemistic summons to depart hence. From another story it appears that although devils are ordinarily commissioned by the Chinese Pluto to convey messages from below, yet since they are unable, like fish out of water, to endure beyond a short time the light and air of the earth's surface, the authorities of Hell and Purgatory are often obliged to press the souls of living men into temporary employ. It is also necessary to disembody a soul whenever some one is wanted to do an errand from earth to Hades, because the devils do not take orders from an earthly official; and while a diabolic messenger can only communicate with mortals by assuming some phenomenal human form, so the soul cannot make its journey to the shades below except by leaving its body behind in a cataleptic condition, awaiting return. We have thus a constant interchange of states through the facility of disembodiment, and the incessant re-appearance of spirits and wandering ghosts in various shapes and *rôles*, making personal identity uncertain, mingling apparitions and *revenants* with the palpable human crowd, and familiarising the mind with the sense of frequent passage to and fro, as if the gates of Life and Death stood always open.[1]

Mr. T'aing Ping, "who took the highest degree in the year 1661," had the misfortune to lose his soul, which escaped one day like smoke from a chimney, and was unable to find its way back to its

[1] The obvious necessity that a spirit who appears must be embodied, seems to be the origin of that Docetism, or philosophy of illusive Appearance, which has played so large a part in the religious imagination of Eastern races, and still causes them great perplexity. It is often impossible to determine whether a familiar form may be a friend or kinsman, or a spectral deception cloaking a mere ghost or demon. This question may arise when some one re-appears after long absence and reported death, declaring that he has not died, and claiming marital or other rights. He may be a dangerous vampire or wandering spirit, who has assumed the dead man's body. Plutarch ("Roman Questions") enquires the reason for the custom of re-admitting such a person into the house, not by the door, but by a hole in the roof. And the difficulty becomes more complicated if his funeral rites had been performed on receiving false news of his death.

mortal tenement. The lost spirit found a Buddhist priest sitting by the roadside, who recommended him, as a scholar, to apply to Confucius and the God of Literature, by whom the case seems to have been specially laid before Buddha himself, who at last gave him a guide to show him where his body still lay. The story is noticed here because it introduces the representatives of three religions as consulted in the matter, although the last and highest place is allotted to Sakya Muni, the Buddha. But perhaps none of these fables bear more instructively upon the point for which they are now quoted than the anecdote of the Emperor T'ai Tung, whose soul visited the infernal regions and promised to send Yen Lo (Pluto) a melon.

"When his Majesty recovered from the trance into which he had been plunged, he gave orders that his promise was to be fulfilled. Just then a man named Lin Chu'an observed a priest with a hairpin belonging to his wife, and, misconstruing the manner in which possession of it had been obtained, abused his wife so severely that she committed suicide. Lin Chu'an himself then determined to follow her example, and to convey the melon to Yen Lo, for which act he was subsequently deified."

Nor is this the only instance of deification for personal service to an emperor. It is related elsewhere that an emperor of the Ming dynasty, to whom shaving was most painful, was one day attended upon by a person who shaved him with such miraculous ease that a large reward was at once offered to the operator, who then revealed himself as an ancient sage canonised, and demanded admission to the higher order of State divinities. His claims to official apotheosis as the God of Letters were admitted, and the foregoing legend explains why he is also the patron saint of Chinese barbers.

Two distinct, yet closely allied, conceptions may be traced in these stories, which are mentioned here because they may be taken to represent the rudimentary forms of imaginative belief that expand later into the grand processes of deification registered in the *Gazette*. The first is, that a person who falls into a swoon, or deep sleep, has been possibly placed on some incorporeal duty, or is visiting that extra-mundane region which can only be reached by putting off this mortal vesture of humanity. It is the notion of the adventures of a soul in dreamland being real. The second conception carries us from the domain of Sleep to that of Death, his twin-brother and co-regent, from a temporary excursion to an absence that may be permanent, though return is possible if a new habitation can be found. And we may remember that death is to a race no more than sleep is to the individual; there are incessant interruptions of consciousness as the generations pass, but the body corporate survives and is strengthened, while the ideas, feelings, and habits are transmitted unbroken. According to this latter conception, messages may be sent to Hades by men who shall have been specially despatched there by death, or who shall have departed this life on some particular duty in that quarter. We all know that these are two very ancient, almost ubiquitous, ideas, that have ramified widely into various modes and expressions of primitive superstition, and have had a long development in the history of religions.

"From this ignorance of how to distinguish Dreams and other strong fancies from Vision and Sense did arise the greatest part of the Religion of the Gentiles in times past."

The quotation is again from Hobbes, who says that in the conscript of primitive mankind, "the soule of man was of the same substance with that which appeareth in a dream to one that sleepeth, or in a looking-glasse to one that is awake." In another passage he places "Opinion of Ghosts" among the "foure things in which consisteth the natural seed of Religion," and has thus anticipated, in his Leviathan, some of the latest conclusions of modern anthropologic research. The notion that the soul leaves the body during a trance or lethargy lies, according to Mr. Herbert

Spencer, at the root of conceptions of a second life after death; a soul may go and return, until to the body it finally returns no more, but it nevertheless exists, and can be communicated with, in an invisible region beyond. To that region, whenever a message is to be sent, the second idea naturally follows among those with whom human life is of no more account than spilt water, of liberating some unlucky soul from its body, with orders to be carried into the next world. It is upon authentic record that human beings were formerly slain in China at the obsequies of great persons, though the practice, which was evidently the survival of earlier tribal customs, softened down into the milder form of voluntary self-sacrifice, usually by self-inhumation with the deceased. It then entered the symbolic and fictitious stage, when the custom of interring with a corpse images of wood or of straw became universal, until it now seems to have dwindled down into the burning of paper dolls at a funeral. And thus, from the bloody immolation of victims at the funeral of a savage warrior, up to the tranquil self-sacrifice of the Chinaman, who agrees in remorseful expiation to accommodate his sovereign by delivering a present in Hades, one may trace the upward modification in form and sentiment of this antique custom which, in the present writer's opinion, indicates one of the principal and earliest motives of human sacrifice. In a ruder society poor Lin Chu'an would have been violently despatched to the infernal gods, while, under the civilised Chinese *régime*, it is at least assumed decorously that he happened to be going that way on his own affairs, and might do the Emperor's bidding without personal inconvenience. Among savages the "other self" is occupied, during a swoon, in some congenial manner—usually brutal or absurd; among the Chinese it is passing an examination, discharging municipal functions, or engaged in some other business that accords with the day-dreams of a highly-educated and much-governed people.

It is easy to perceive how all this vivid realisation of two existences, with similar environment and occupations, may fall in with and support the cardinal political theory of the subordination, for all administrative purposes, of things spiritual to the temporal authority. For if the two states of being so much resemble each other, if intercourse between the two worlds is not much rarer than between two strange countries, and if the spirits who haunt the visible world are merely disembodied men whose previous history is perfectly well-known, and who are open, now as formerly, to official manipulation—this leaves little room for pretension on sacerdotal or supernatural grounds to independence of the sovereign power. Hades itself can be treated like Tibet, as an outlying province of the empire, under a mysterious kind of hieratic home rule; and, within the Emperor's terrestrial dominions at any rate, any tendency of spiritual persons, disembodied or divinised, to insubordination or local disaffection would be inconsistent with their accepted position under his Government. As politicians who can command success do not always trouble themselves to deserve it, so a potentate who bestows distinctions upon divinities need not be at the pains of securing their approbation or mitigating their anger by any such self-humiliation as has been practised by priest-ridden kings. A simple tribal chief may prostrate himself before the god of his family or his mountain; but a mighty emperor, though he shows all decent reverence to established images and worships, has, in fact, more dignified ways of dealing with a great multitude of deities, among whom it is obviously necessary to uphold the authoritative principle that order is Heaven's first law. Here again, it may be said, we may follow a primitive idea through the process of gradual refinement; beginning with the grotesque supplications of a savage to wandering ghosts or capricious

sprites, and rising gradually to the high regulative ceremonial of the Chinese Government. We see the gods improve steadily in form and function; the rites are organised and subjected to proper control; in short, we see religion, politics, and society keeping step, and marching abreast, as they submit to discipline and go through their evolutions. The cardinal fact of the religious system, the line that strings together all these formal changes, is the apotheosis of man; "the great idol of the pagans is deified humanity."

The religious polity of the Chinese is thus a powerful pagan realisation of Hobbism; and though it seems to have been carried further in China than among the empires of antiquity, we may conjecture that the principle has prevailed more or less in all governments that have had to deal with polytheism, especially with the extraordinary commixture of gods, under an extensive territorial dominion. The State has always endeavoured to control and organise the religion of the people. Something of the kind may even be observed in the philosophic statesmanship of Plato, who, while insisting in the "Laius"[1] upon the moral and spiritual essence of religious service, lays stress also on the necessity of maintaining by law the prescribed ritual, of honouring the Olympian gods, the gods of the State, the gods below, and, next to the gods, the demons, spirits, heroes, and ancestral Manes. And although the strange doctrine of certain philosophers, "that the gods exist neither by nature, nor by art, but are such as the laws ordain," is condemned as inadequate and harmful, taken by itself, this is mainly because a wise legislator should use persuasion, as far as he can, to induce men to accept the established religion. So long, indeed, as the temporal power is more enlightened, and consequently higher in the moral scale, than the hierarchies, it must be the constant endeavour and aim of the rulers to regulate and confine, within rational limits, all their loose and disorderly spiritual manifestations. And thus, in China, we can still survey the spectacle of a great civilised Government face to face, not only with an organised church claiming direct succession and inspiration from the founder, but also with religion in its inorganic state—in fact, with natural religion, as it grows up out of the free exuberance of man's fears and fancies. This is the more interesting and instructive because it reflects a survival from the time before creeds and churches began in Asia (and they have begun nowhere else), when all religions upon earth were in a similar condition. Since that time Islam has conquered western Asia, and in eastern Asia Buddhism has a vast predominance; they represent two opposite principles of war and peace, of action and meditation; while India lies interposed between these two first-class religious sovereignties, having expelled Buddha and only partially submitted to Mahomet.

In western Europe, where we have been for centuries accustomed to treat religion metaphysically, it may appear surprising that even towards polytheism a Government should be able to assume so dictatorial and cynical an attitude. But we have to remember, in the first place, that polytheism has, in fact, never been treated seriously by statesmen or philosophers, except possibly by the English in India; and secondly, that this practical way of handling it is warranted, and partly explained, by a right appreciation of the ideas which, from the times of classic paganism, underlie the popular worship. It is not so much a moral or metaphysical system, as a method of propitiation. Look at the dialogue in Plato's "Euthyphro," where Socrates tries to extract from a learned Athenian divine and soothsayer some definition of "this attention to the gods which is called piety."

[1] The references to Plato are taken entirely from Jowett's translation, not from the original.

Euthyphro. "Let me simply say that piety or holiness is learning how to please the gods in word or deed, by prayers and sacrifices."

Socrates. "Do you mean that piety is a sort of science of praying and sacrificing?"

Euthyphro. "Yes, I do."

Socrates. "And sacrificing is giving to the gods and piety is asking of the gods?"

Euthyphro. "Yes, Socrates."

Socrates. "Upon this view, then, piety is a science of asking and giving?"

Euthyphro. "You understand me capitally, Socrates."

. . . . . .

Socrates. "Then piety, Euthyphro, is an art which gods and men have of doing business with one another?"

Euthyphro. "That is an expression which you may use if you like."

Here we have the foundation of natural religion briefly and plainly defined; it is the aboriginal application of the principle of *Do ut des*, the simple feeling underlying the multiplicity of expression; and the most ingenious researches into the evolution of primitive ideas will hardly take us beyond or behind it. The difficulty which Socrates puts to his diviner, as to what benefit can possibly accrue to the gods from the service or gifts of man, seems intended to drive him into the dilemma of admitting either that the gods are merely magnified men with human tastes, or that prayer and sacrifice are wholly superficial customs, being unconnected with justice and holiness, which the true gods really love. But such a difficulty would give little trouble to the Pekin Board of Worship, which openly does business with the gods on behalf of the various departments of Government for the judicious maintenance of useful popular illusions. In the *Pekin Gazette*, as in the Platonic dialogue, we find the ritual and worships of polytheism treated as the art of dealing with the unintelligible influences and incalculable forces by which the unlearned multitude finds itself to be surrounded. So long as these invisible forces are believed to be more or less under the influence of the invisible beings who rise to distinction in the domain of ghosts and spirits, this art consists mainly of propitiation by prayers, gifts, and honours; and when wider experience, and more accurate observation of consequences, prove this method to be at least uncertain, religion tends naturally to withdraw within the sphere of metaphysics and morality. For morality, being a generalised experience of the right way of living, may, in this sense, be regarded as a wise and far-seeing appreciation of the conditions of the struggle for existence. To say, as is often said, that it is opposed to this struggle, or ignored in it, is an error; for the moralist utilises these forces reasonably instead of battling against them; they are made conducive to human welfare, like a river that is drawn off to turn a water-mill. In the same manner the Chinese Government, conscious of its inability to dam up or disregard the floods of superstition which saturate the Chinese people, endeavours to treat this kind of religion as a natural phenomenon, like the rains or the shifting rivers, and makes the best of it by taking the matter under executive control, in order to direct the inundations into fixed channels.

There has of late been much speculation, in books and lectures, regarding the origin and evolution of natural religion; and the outlying corners of the earth have been searched for any myth, legend, custom, or fanciful delusion that may be supposed to throw light upon the connection between the earliest and later superstitions. If it were possible for any one to make a comparative study, within the countries themselves, of the popular religion now existing in India and China respectively, the results would be probably far more instructive to the scientific enquirer than collections of dubious folk-lore, or the idiotic stories told by Digger Indians and Esquimaux. Here, in eastern Asia, we may see two societies of first-class magnitude resting upon high antiquity and continuous traditions, in one of which natural religion has for centuries been under the moulding hands of a powerful

priestly caste, by whom polytheism is fostered and humoured as the embroidered veil of certain profound inner truths and doctrines that lie behind it. In the other country the State, not the priesthood, has assumed the supreme direction of divine things, and the deep metaphysical background is necessarily wanting. In both countries the polytheism seems to have this common characteristic, that it has come down to the present day from time immemorial without essential change; that it has grown up, and still flourishes freely and naturally, as it was in the Juventus Mundi. The primordial ideas as to the nature of the gods, and their ways with men, survive side by side with the loftiest liturgies, with philosophy, with rationalism; the simplest rites are practised more or less by all classes, indiscriminately and good-humouredly; it is like a religious fair open to all who cater for the amusement, the astonishment, or the credulity of the crowd. To the Chinese man of letters, or the Hindu transcendentalist, as formerly to the cultivated Roman of the empire, the inconsistency and multiplicity of beliefs and worships present no administrative or intellectual difficulty. One explanation is found in the confluence of races and deities under a single great territorial dominion; for trade and conquest, military or commercial expeditions, the opening out of new communications, the annexing of new provinces, all tend to cross, complicate, and multiply the myths and forms of worship, so long as the world practises free trade in religious things. We all know how the influx of strange gods and foreign rites produced the confused polytheism of the Roman empire, where, however, it fell so far below the intellectual level of civil society that it was easily swept away by Christianity. Then came a reverse process, when religion attained its highest elevation, and civil society relapsed into barbarism. From the period when Christianity and Islam made a partition of the provinces of the dismembered Roman empire, these two great militant and missionary faiths have for centuries been treating all other worships in a manner unknown, it may be said, to the præ-Christian world—stamping out obscure rites and indigenous deities, extirpating them utterly by fire and sword. Remembering that the destruction of paganism, and the tremendous conflicts of rival religions, are facts of capital importance in the history of the nations from Ireland to the Indus, we may well regard with attentive curiosity the spiritual condition of a country like China, in which no such events seem ever to have happened on any great scale before the Taiping rebellion of our own era. And now that England has added to her Indian sovereignty a great Indo-Chinese kingdom, peopled by Buddhists, it may be worth her while, for reasons which concern our administrators, to remember that the modern State policy of leaving a religion to shift for itself has not been universally applicable or appropriate.

VII

ORIGINS AND INTERPRETATIONS OF PRIMITIVE RELIGIONS [1]

Collection of materials and classification—Miss Kingsley an excellent collector—Her description of West African superstitions, fetish, demonology, witchcraft, poisoning—Mutual condition of West African races—The wandering soul, ghosts, and deities—Taboo—Secret Societies—Manners and morals of the people—Mr. Jevons' theory—Evolution of beliefs—Primitive monotheism—Discussion of his views and methods—Taboo—Totemism The evolutionary argument—Professor Max Müller's book—The Science of Mythology—Philological interpretation of myths—The solar hero—Physical origin of all Aryan gods—The melting down of epic scenes and characters—Concluding remarks.

THE comparative study of Natural Religion, like other branches of empiri-

[1] Mary H. Kingsley, "Travels in West Africa." Lond. 1897.

Frank Byron Jevons, M.A., "An Introduction to the History of Religion." Lond. 1896.

The Right Hon. Professor Max Müller, K.M., "Contributions to the Science of Mythology." Lond. 1897.

cal research, divides itself into two working departments. In one of them is the collector of materials, who roams far afield and scrambles about among wild folk to gather his specimens and take note of varieties; in the other is the philosophic savant who remains at home to receive what is brought him from different countries, to classify, collate, and form his scientific inductions. Sometimes the two branches are successfully combined in one person; though we usually find that the adventurous traveller, with an eye for primitive beliefs and customs, and the gift of interpreting them, is differently constituted from the home-keeping student of results. The former has the great advantage of knowing the environment, the true connexion of one species with another, their signification among the people on the spot; while the latter, who deals with them in a library or a museum, may have a wider range of survey and a better method of classification. On the other hand, as his aim is toward bringing a heap of material into symmetrical arrangement, he is often prone to overstrain his theories, to use the same weight and measure for all his facts, to lay stress on superficial resemblances, and in other respects to suffer the disadvantages which beset every judge, however able and learned, who is obliged to take evidence at second hand.

The writers of the books which I propose to review may be taken as fairly exemplifying these two classes. Miss Mary Kingsley has explored, with great enterprise and an admirable disdain of discomfort, some regions of the West African coast that have been hitherto little visited by competent observers. She has consorted with cannibals, visited their homes, travelled in the company of the fetish worshipper and discoursed with him on sacred things; she has trusted herself alone with savage tribes, and has won their confidence. Of all these opportunities she has made excellent use. Mr. Jevons, again, has equipped himself for a comprehensive investigation into the foundations of primitive beliefs by an attentive study of all recent writings upon this obscure and intricate question; he has a wide knowledge of the literature, ancient and modern, that has accumulated over it; and his design is to apply evolutionary principles (with certain important reservations) to the whole history of Religion. Professor Max Müller has long since attained a brilliant reputation and great popularity as the interpreter of Aryan mythology.

As the hearing of witnesses goes before the summing up of the judges, we may begin, logically, with Miss Kingsley's book. It must, however, be in the first place clearly understood that Miss Kingsley's travels were not undertaken exclusively in quest of the religious idea. She says, indeed, that her "fixed desire was to study fetish," but we learn that she went also for beetles and fishes; her general object appears to have been to see life in the deadly climate of the West African coast within the tropics, and to examine the social and administrative conditions under which it is endured by mankind in and about Lower Guinea. On the whole, although Miss Kingsley enjoyed the country and likes its people, these conditions seem to be unattractive. Very grisly anecdotes are told of the sudden and fatal illnesses, the rapid succession of official vacancies, the fevers, the putrescences, and the noxious animals. Scorpions, snakes, and crocodiles infest land and water; the insects are even more ferocious, proportionately to their size, than the wild beasts; and the men are no better than the animals. In regard to Sierra Leone its English bishop has recently printed the painful admission that small social gatherings are almost unknown there through fear of poisoning, which is apparently a practice universally prevalent among all classes of the native population, and operates as a check upon the excessive ill-usage of wives. Miss Kingsley's courage and scientific ardour have enabled her, in spite of all these risks and of serious hard-

ships, to mix freely with the people, to wander in magnificent scenes of mountain and primeval forest, and to bring back stores of fresh information regarding the fishes, the folklore, and the fetish. I must reluctantly leave untouched the record of her personal adventures, although it abounds with shrewd remarks and amusing incidents. In regard to the author's style, it is clear and unvarnished, though the conjecture may be hazarded that during her sojourn in a region notoriously overcrowded by spirits, she may peradventure have become unconsciously possessed by an humoristic fiend, whom in this Christian land she would do well to cast out.

The first thing, says Miss Kingsley, before starting to hunt the religious idea in West Africa, is to burn all one's notions about sun myths and the worship of elemental forces. She herself had set out in full confidence that Mr. Frazer's book, "The Golden Bough," provided the "semi-universal key" to early customs and beliefs everywhere; and she soon discovered how very few of the inner mental chambers in which the wild man's fancies are bred, this key would unlock. "The study of natural phenomena knocks the bottom out of any man's conceit, if it is done honestly and not by selecting only those facts which fit in with his preconceived or ingrafted notions"—true words that should be gravely pondered by all ingenious folklorists. And she rightly enjoins upon the student, as before all things necessary, a careful reading of Dr. E. B. Tylor's work, which really contains almost everything that can be soberly and safely written upon Primitive Culture. She observes that the Africans often have remarkable acuteness and a large share of common-sense, that the form of their mind is quite different from the childish stage; nor are they flighty, mystical, or dreamers. The remark is important, because nothing is more common than a comparison of primitive mankind with civilised children, whereas the only common ground is unbounded credulity; for the experiences, which shape the imaginative faculty, are in the two cases altogether unlike, and the child mostly takes his fantastic impressions from the sayings and doings of his elders. The animistic tendency of civilised man to treat a ship or a steam-engine as a living creature, whom it is possible to love or hate according to its behaviour, is much nearer the intellectual attitude of the savage to Nature at large.

Now the peculiarity of West Africa, as a field for the botanical study of beliefs, is that while almost every other part of the four continents has been more or less overlaid by some great conquering faith, in this region the indigenous superstitions grow as rank and free as the primeval forests. The proselytism of Islam or Christianity has only scattered among them a few ideas and doctrines that have been absorbed, with various distortions, into the mass of legends and practices. Probably the aboriginal African has for many generations been moving westward, under the pressure of stronger tribes, until he has been brought up against the coast-line of the impassable Atlantic, in a climate where the struggle for existence is fierce and unceasing. Here if anywhere the life of man is, to borrow the words of Hobbes, "poore, nasty, brutish, and short"; and as is their life so is their religion. The people who inhabit the inland country are for the most part cannibals, among whom to kill or be killed is as much their everyday lot as among the wild animals, and of whom some tribes have become degraded during many generations of retreat before stronger enemies. May we not expect, then, to find in this very low stratum of human society any of those primal forms which the evolutionist can treat as the simplest germs of higher and wider religious conceptions, providing the materials for a connected and tenable demonstration of the growth and development of Natural Religion?

One may regret, as Miss Kingsley's

collection of facts and observations is so valuable, that she has not thought it worth while to arrange and group them in more consecutive order, instead of dropping them somewhat fortuitously over her five chapters on Fetish. But she has evidently no intention of propitiating the critical spirit embodied in indolent reviewers; and as an artist she may have desired us to realise the cloudy atmosphere that overhangs the whole region of African supernaturalism. It may, therefore, be useful if, in an attempt to summarise briefly the results of her enquiries, we begin by taking, in the first place, her information regarding the kind or description of the beings, divine or disembodied, whom the African of this region fears or adores, their origins, attributes, the tokens that denote their presence, the signs of their power. The second part of our summary would then deal with the rites and customs, the rules of procedure for doing business with divinity, and the phenomena of that universal delusion, which has infested all early communities like the plague or the Black Death, witchcraft. We have to understand that in the primitive world there are two great societies, of gods and of men, with a strong family resemblance in the matters of taste, feelings, diet, habits, and vicious propensities in particular; having also reciprocal needs and grievances, so that they are to a certain degree mutually dependent on each other's good offices. The divine community, being much the stronger and more aggressive, is able to levy oppressive tribute upon long-suffering mankind, and even to insist upon servile obedience. Nevertheless we find that in West Africa, as elsewhere, the two societies keep up constant communication; there is much emigration to and fro; the human soul quits its earthly tenement with a distinct *animus revertendi*, the deities take bodily shape for a season; and it is plain that without continual intercourse and the interchange of dues and services, neither of them could flourish satisfactorily. It is also clear that even to spiritual despotism there must always be a certain limit, a point at which long-suffering humanity begins to rebel, as when the gods do very little for worshippers and demand too much of them.

With these remarks we may take up Miss Kingsley's account of African demonology and witchcraft. In the first place, what sort of mind is it that transforms its impressions into fearful or grotesque shapes, and peoples the surrounding atmosphere with them?

> "The mental condition of the lower forms of both races seems very near the other great border line that separates man from the anthropoid apes, and I believe that if we had the material, or rather if we could understand it, we should find little or no gap existing in mental evolution in this old undisturbed continent of Africa."

It is among the negroes, therefore, that may be found "the earliest forms both of religion and witchcraft"—witchcraft being definable as the power possessed by some malevolent mortal who has acquired control over spirits; whereas religion may be roughly described in this stage as a belief in their direct supernatural action. With regard, then, to the divinities, we are told that there is somewhere a god who originally created the world and all that it contains, but who, like the Indian Brahma, takes no interest in its management; he has laid out the universe and stocked it; he has done his work, and left the administration to others; he is evidently the Final Cause invented to explain phenomenal existence, as a house implies an architect. The unfortunate consequence of his abdication is that the everyday affairs of mankind are consigned to the caprice of a disorderly crowd of spirits, very largely recruited by the incessant transmigration of souls, with diverse local origins and habitats, in the trees, the rocks, or the bodies of wild animals. There are also pure nature deities, household lares, and mere fetish: the animistic fancies suggested by queer uncanny things. Wandering demons, like

Sasabonsum and his wife, and horrid apparitions which to see is to die, are also common; while dangerous places, such as rocks, whirlpools, and swamps, are haunted, as usual, by sprites invisible. The disembodied ghost roves unresting, a mournful and troublesome vagrant, until its manes have been appeased by the proper rites, when it is relegated to the dim underground kingdom, which represents the crude indistinct notions formed by all early polytheists of some refuge, or prison house, or penal settlement for those who have finally vanished beyond the world of ordinary sense. "This place has its pleasures and pains, not necessarily retributive or rewarding, but dim . . . a veritable shadow-land where men have not the joys of life, but only their shadow;" and the native proverb, which says that one day on the upper earth is worth a year in the nether world, corroborates what we know from the Odyssey of the classic Hades, where Achilles says that he would rather be a ploughboy than reign over the innumerable dead. One finds traces of the universal tradition that in old times there was closer intercourse between gods and men, who went up and down by a ladder reaching from earth to sky, until it was thrown down from above because the earth-born tried to push their way into heaven.

All this is merely the simpler sort of paganism that has prevailed in all times and places wherever superstitions have been left to grow in their natural disorderly fashion, to vary according to the environment, and to reflect through the popular imagination the conditions of human existence. There is nothing new in these African beliefs and legends; they are chiefly valuable as cumulative proofs of the very narrow grooves to which the image-making mind of man seems to be confined, of the short range within which its inventive faculty appears to work, passing the ideas from hand to hand, adapting, enlarging, and refining a few original conceptions. The typical form survives all changes, as the steel axe of the modern carpenter has not varied far from the shape of the prehistoric stone hatchet; it is obviously moulded by sensations and experiences, by moods and manner, by changing circumstance and perceptions of utility. And the process of thought moves step by step.

> "You soon become conscious of the careful way a negro follows his idea. Certain customs you can, by the exercise of great patience, trace back in a perfectly smooth line to their source in some natural phenomena, or to reasons of utility."

The killing of wives at their husbands' funeral is a fair example. The colourable object is that they may accompany him into his next existence; but a Calabar chief explained to Miss Kingsley that the custom was also a salutary check upon husband poisoning; and one cannot doubt that he is right. The progress from the rough-and-ready expedients of early society, where the same individual turns his hand to all trades, up to the specialisation of handicrafts, may be traced in supernaturalism as in political economy. Miss Kingsley tells us that the African sprites are not easily classified by their functions, although they are all to some extent limited as to the nature of their power, and work only on certain lines, so that there is no one of them who can do all things. We have here the first stages of the gradual evolution of the professional or departmental divinity.

At the bottom of all this confused jumble of gods and goblins lies, so far as I can make out, the inveterate belief in the migratory soul, whom death renders homeless until it can find another abiding-place by re-embodiment, which again is dependent upon the due performance of mortuary rites. This idea of the wandering soul is so universal, so obviously founded upon the instinctive human refusal or incapacity to accept death as the final extinguisher, that it may be taken as the ultimate ascertainable basis of religion in a state of nature. "The really important part of every funeral is the burying of the spirit, which

allows it to settle down in some fresh tenement." Nevertheless, although the ghosts are all worshipped, although men and animals are offered to the souls of deceased persons, Miss Kingsley maintains, if I understand her rightly, that a clear line of demarcation exists between ghosts and gods; that the former never develop into the latter; and she warns us against confusing the offerings to the dead with sacrifices made for the propitiation of deities. At this point, therefore, she differs from the conclusions of Herbert Spencer and other authorities; nor is it easy to make out plainly from her book the grounds upon which she disentangles such a distinct and important dividing line out of the complicated medley of souls and demons, spirits and deities, with much the same habits, powers for mischief, and wonder-working characteristics, that are the objects of fear and adoration in West Africa. That famous men were constantly taking rank, after death, among the gods of classic Greece and Rome, is beyond dispute; that ancestral worship is often the first step to divine honours in polytheistic Asia, especially in China, cannot be gainsaid; the promotion of heroes, saints, and martyrs goes on continuously and manifestly. Miss Kingsley, however, is so careful and trustworthy an observer, that we must accept her conclusion, reaffirmed in her latest work, that "West Africa has not deified ancestors." It is a curious and valuable fact, proving that what is true of ancient civilised religions that have been to some degree systematised, may be untrue of worships and incoherent superstitions of African tribes, who might easily make the distinctions in practice and belief, without noticing the close filiation which connects the two ideas. It may be noticed, indeed, that in the West African Hades the souls of great men are privileged to prey upon the crowd of ignoble ghosts, although yet they seem not to return to power in the upper air. And one may throw out, also, the conjecture that in remote and obscure West Africa, men do not reach the necessary pitch of renown for mighty deeds or sanctity that qualifies them, in larger countries, for elevation after death to high place among recognised divinities.

Sacrifice and incantation are the well-known professional methods of dealing with spirits. The meat of the sacrifice is eaten, for the blood is the life offered up; and incantation may be by prayer or by mystic words and signs of the masonic order. The Taboo, or interdict laid upon certain things, is, Miss Kingsley thinks, a form of sacrifice, being a kind of religious abstinence imposed upon persons, and varying infinitely, as to the thing prohibited, with each person. Of this world-wide custom, upon the meaning of which learned folklorists have expended great ingenuity, I shall have occasion to make some observations presently. Meanwhile it is clear that the really dominant feature of West African superstitions, to which all others are secondary, and which permeates the whole religious atmosphere, is the belief in witchcraft. This is the terrible plague which is always at its worst in the lowest stages of human society, which disappears very slowly as the intellectual level rises, which has never been entirely extirpated from the most civilised communities, and which in our own day is finding a kind of scientific interpretation as a psychical force. Among early communities witchcraft is uppermost where the religion is lowest; nor is it until religion gathers strength enough to draw apart, to give fierce battle to witchcraft, and to denounce it as a black disreputable art, that there is any hope of spiritual improvement. The following extract contains Miss Kingsley's definition of witchcraft—

"They regard their god as the creator of man, plants, animals, and the earth, and they hold that having made them he takes no further interest in the affair. But not so the crowd of spirits with which the universe is peopled; they take only too much interest, and the Bantu wishes they would not, and is perpetually saying so in his prayers, a large percentage whereof amounts to "Go away; we don't want you";

"Come not into this house, this village, or its plantations." He knows from experience that the spirits pay little heed to these objurgations, and as they are a people that must be attended to, he develops a cult whereby they may be managed, used, and understood. This cult is what we call witchcraft."

In a later passage, however, we have "the origin of man's religious belief" ascribed to motives and impressions that seem almost identical with those out of which witchcraft is said to have been developed. It is generally assumed, says Miss Kingsley, in the infancy of humanity, that death is always the consequence of the action of some malignant spirit, and that there is no accidental or natural death—

"A man having thus gained a belief that there are more than human actors in life's tragedy, the idea that disease is also a manifestation of some invisible being's wrath and power seems to me natural and easy; and he knows you can get another man for a consideration to kill or harm a third party, and so he thinks that for a consideration you can also get one of these superhuman beings which we call gods or devils, but which the African regards in another light, to do so.

"A certain set of men and women then specialise off to study how these spirits can be managed, and so arises a priesthood; and the priests, or medicine men, as they are called in their earliest forms, gradually, for their own ends, elaborate and wrap round their profession with ritual and mystery."

Although this view of religious origins does by no means cover the whole ground, there is, of course, much truth in it; but the point for observation is that from these extracts we should judge Miss Kingsley's conclusion to be that witchcraft and religious rites in West Africa are originally undistinguishable. If this is correct, there can be no doubt that such a confusion of two ideas, which in their later forms not only stand widely apart, but are always irreconcilably hostile, denotes the very lowest stage of aboriginal superstition wherever it prevails. The line between abject fetishism and witchcraft may be difficult to trace in the elementary stages; yet it has been argued that from the beginning a true distinction can invariably be recognised. According to this theory the witch is more nearly allied with rudimentary science than with priestcraft: for he relies not upon prayer, worship, or propitiation of divinities, but upon his own secret knowledge and experience of the effect producible by certain tricks and mysterious devices upon the unseen powers, over whom he has attained a sort of command. Instead of serving, like the priest, these powers, he is enabled by his art to make them serve him; and it is for this reason that his practices very soon become denounced and detested by the priesthood. To the priest belong adoration and propitiatory sacrifice; if these things will not move the divine authorities there is nothing else to be done by the supplicant; but where the case can be diagnosed as witchcraft, there is a human being within reach who can be cruelly punished; and the fact that he is held personally responsible shows that the occult faculty of mischief-making is actually detected within him. When a man sets up in sorcery he becomes the scapegoat for all the ills of mankind which kings and priests cannot cure, and every inexplicable wrong is laid to his account, so that his reputation for direct wonder-working becomes fatal to him. The priest, on the other hand, is merely the steward or minister of an irresponsible and unapproachable divinity. The first step necessary in West Africa for the profession of sorcery is to entertain a familiar spirit, which is done by cutting a rude wooden human figure, into which he is persuaded to locate himself, when his services become at the sorcerer's disposal. Here we have already the tendency to obtain command over supernatural forces, instead of obedience and prostration before them; and if the witch has hit upon any very rude observations of physical cause and effect, if he knows some quackery in medicine, is weatherwise, or is cunning in what has been called "natural magic," the familiar spirit will get all the credit of his ingenuity. In the departments of love and death he has an immense practice; while all the intelligent folk know, as

Miss Kingsley remarks, that "there is a lot of poisoning" in the business, as is shown by the wide diffusion among her African acquaintance of the treatment of persons bewitched by a strong emetic. But in witch ordeals your only real chance of escape is by bribing the presiding expert.[1]

Miss Kingsley has much to say of the secret societies, which operate in the dark, like the Spanish Inquisition, for the discovery and punishment of social and religious backsliding, and which also cover a great deal of sheer wickedness in the way of murder and cannibalism. Of course there is initiation, followed by hideous rites and the marking down for assassination of some victim, who may be a rich relative or some other obnoxious person whom it is convenient to put away under the pretext of an ordained sacrifice to the society's fetish. The worshippers of one notorious fetish are called Human Leopards,

"because when seizing their victims for sacrifice they cover themselves with leopard skins, and, imitating the leopard's roar, sprang upon their victims, plunging two three-pronged forks into each side of the throat. There are also human alligators, disguised as alligators, who swim in creeks upon the canoes and carry off the crew."

These associations work in the dark because their deeds are too shocking for public opinion even in West Africa, being also, of course, highly criminal within any colonial jurisdiction; and they illustrate in its lowest and most nefarious stage that spirit of licence under the cloak of religious mysteries which has given such meetings an ill repute in all ages and countries. The terror caused by the real leopard or crocodile has invested these animals with a kind of sanctity, so that to kill them brings bad luck; and this immunity is to the advantage of the murderer in the beast's skin, against whom it is difficult to bring proof that will satisfy white man's law. The best way of putting down these hideous practices would probably be to institute a detective police with special powers, upon the plan that was successfully adopted for extirpating the Thugs, who were a secret society of stranglers and poisoners in India.

Some apology is due to Miss Kingsley for reviewing in this place only those chapters of her book which deal with the West African superstitions. It should be clearly understood that the range of her narrative and observations is much wider, and that its value consists largely in the description which she gives of the state and prospect of manners and morals on the coast, where the native tribes are gradually feeling the influence of the commerce, the colonisation, and the missionaries of Europe. Her conclusions are not hopeful, for the savage, like the wild animal, seems to degenerate as soon as he is tamed; and security is apt to breed indolence, which is fatal to the tribe, "for inactivity in Africa is death." And when you have eliminated from the indigenous religion all its superstitious terrors, the African, according to Miss Kingsley, falls away into a condition of careless self-indulgent debauchery, under which the race loses its vital vigour, and degenerates physically without much moral compensation. The prospect of punishment in a future existence is not near enough to tame the wild passions of the sinful savage; he adopts only what is pleasant to him in the new dispensation, and degenerates in consequence, because what he really needs is severe religious discipline.

"Nothing strikes one so much, in studying the degeneration of these native tribes, as the direct effect that civilisation and reformation has in hastening it. The worst enemy to the existence of the African tribe is the one who comes to it and says: 'Now you must civilise and come to school, and leave off all those awful goings-on of yours and settle down quietly.' The tribe does so; the African is teachable and tractable. . . . He treats his religion much as other men do: when he gets slightly educated—a little scientific, one might say—he removes from

[1] In "West African Studies," Miss Kingsley has shown that the hatred of witches is intense in societies which have no organised priesthood. I have no doubt she is right; yet I hold to the view that wherever the priest does exist, he is clearly distinguishable from the witch and his mortal enemy.

his religion all the disagreeable parts. He promptly eliminates its equivalent Hell, represented in Fetishism by immediate and not future retribution.

"Then goes his rigid Sabbath-keeping and food-restriction equivalent, and he has nothing left but the agreeable portions—dances, polygamy, and so on; and it's a very bad thing for him. I only state these things so as to urge upon people at home the importance of combining technical instruction in their mission teaching, which by instilling into the African mind ideas of discipline, and providing him with manual occupation, will save him from these relapses, which are now the reproach of missionary effort and the curse and degradation of the African."

. . . . . .

From this curious and valuable description of primitive beliefs and customs in their natural state of entangled confusion I turn to the philosophic and well-ordered survey of their origin, interconnection, and underlying psychology that is presented to us by Mr. Jevons. In the opening pages of his volume we are warned that such religions as Christianity, Mahomedanism, and Buddhism have no place in the history to which the author introduces us. These positive religions, as he terms them, were designed to supersede others to which, being practised as a matter of custom and tradition, he gives the name of customary religions, and with these only he intends to deal. To this vast residuum of institutions, beliefs, and usages prevalent everywhere among wild folk and in the countries of ancient civilisation, he applies the methods of science and the principles of anthropology.

Now the instrument chiefly employed by science in the prosecution of these researches is the comparative method, which examines apparent resemblances in phenomena for the purpose of bringing out their essential differences; the record of successive differences being the history of their evolution. But in tracing the development of later from earlier forms, Mr. Jevons desires to guard himself against admitting that monotheism was reached by a slow condensation out of rudimentary notions. Ideas and institutions, he observes, not only grow but decay; the Roman empire was a moral degeneration from the republic, and art often goes backward. The principle that religion is evolved may thus be accepted without rejecting the possibility that monotheism may have been the original religion, although on the other hand our lack of complete evidence prevents our assuming it to have been so.

The author's views in regard to the evolutionary process are worked out at length in his concluding chapters "On Monotheism and the Evolution of Belief." After stating very fairly the data of observation and experience which go to support the hypothesis that monotheism was evolved out of polytheism, he proceeds to argue, on the other side, that on evolutionary principles, and following the analogy of the law governing the development of physical organisms, this hypothesis is untenable. Two of the highest existing species (monkeys and men, for example) may be descended from a common ancestor, but not one from the other. To suppose that monotheism could have descended from polytheism is, therefore, in his opinion, unscientific; and, what is more, Mr. Jevons holds that it would be contradicted by the actual facts of religious history, for he contends that the polytheisms known to science never pass into monotheism. And I gather that he prefers to conclude that the original ancestor of the monotheist was the worshipper of one out of a multitude of gods. The view adopted seems to be that man recognised from the beginning —subjectively, not from the external facts of which he was conscious—his dependence on a personal and supernatural Will, but found it to be impossible to identify this Will with more than one external object. Such may have been, originally, the totem or tribal god, and this single point of adoration is only lost eventually in polytheism by the confusion of deities resulting from a conflux of tribes, when each clan of a

confederation worships not only its own totem god but the other clan totems. Or else the different gods are identified and their cults are fused, so that one deity is produced out of many; but in either case, whether of polytheism or syncretism, the original antecedent worship may have been monotheistic.

"The sacrifices offered to Jehovah by the Jews point back not to polytheism but to a low form of monotheism, in which each clan that offered sacrifice worshipped but one god, though that god was conceived in the form of the animal or plant which was sacrificed. This brings us to the question whether totemism, that lowest form of monotheism, is the earliest form of religion; and for the answer to that question we are reduced to conjecture."

Mr. Jevons argues, also, that since of spiritual things the knowledge comes by inward intuition, not by means of inference, deductive or inductive, so it is quite possible that a revelation of monotheism may have been made to primitive man.

It would not have been fair if, in endeavouring to review briefly an interesting book, no mention had been made of the limitations thus placed by Mr. Jevons upon his application of evolutionary principles to the history of religion. But neither can I abstain from intimating the opinion that by diverging, with some incongruity, from the main lines of his argument, he has unnecessarily imported some disputable matter into his investigation of the origins and development of primitive beliefs. It was enough for him, I think, to have excluded at the outset the great monotheistic faiths from the scope of his dissertations, without entering upon theories regarding the separate sources of monotheism, which are not likely to convince the thoroughgoing evolutionist, while the theologian may repudiate them as offering battle to the enemy on unfavourable ground. Revealed religion will have nothing to do with totemism, or with the hazardous contention that the pagan who selected for worship one god out of a legion, carried in his breast the primeval monotheistic revelation. And the students for whom this book is professedly written may not hold fast to the rather fine distinction between this view and the Comtist induction, that the adoration of many supernatural agencies gradually concentrated upon the notion of a single omnipotent personality. To quote from one of the able essays issued under the title of "Lux Mundi" (a book with which Mr. Jervons is evidently familiar) —"It is impolitic as it is unscientific to identify Christian Apology with a position" (the belief in primitive monotheism) "which may one day prove untenable." And though Mr. Jevons attempts no such express identification, the drift of his argument sets plainly that way.

Apart from these speculations there is substantial value in the careful comparison made by Mr. Jevons of the different shapes and species of religious belief to be found among all sorts and conditions of men, wherever the great creed and churches have not formulated and moulded them authoritatively. His views are laid out ably and persuasively, with great wealth of illustration, and a considerable capacity for assorting and co-ordinating a vast array of heterogeneous facts. Nevertheless there are indications that the spirit of scientific arrangement, the craving of the modern mind for logical demonstration, are often too strong for him, so that he is impelled to lay down the basis of primordial ideas in terms that are, I think, too formal and definite. In the remarkable chapter, which is well worth close reading, on the "Supernatural," he contends that from the beginning man has distinguished between the natural and the supernatural, because from the first he had a clear though a very confined perception of uniformity in nature. Laws on which man could count, and sequences which he habitually initiated and controlled, were, he says, natural. It was the violation of these sequences and the frustration of his expectations that produced his original notion that the supernatural power was manifested

merely in suspending or counteracting the uniformity of Nature. According to this view any unusual movement of a river such as a great flood, was first taken to be the sign of an active water spirit, who subsequently became identified, as the river god, with the ordinary aspect and customary flow of the stream which he had been discovered to inhabit.

It is always very difficult for the civilised enquirer to follow out and define the train of logical thought which brings primitive folk to their beliefs, and I doubt whether any light is really gained by crediting them with the ideas which underlie such terms as the "uniformity of Nature," "supernatural," and "natural." So far as one can understand the savage, he makes no such distinction, and what the higher minds mean by supernatural is to him the most natural explanation of everything, usual or unusual, by which he is surrounded. He accounts for all movement by life and will; he invests even motionless objects with an indwelling spirit; he worships them all indiscriminately; and the fact that certain sequences are ordinary, and rarely if ever interrupted, does not remove them out of the divine category, for a tree or a stone may have mysterious influences; nor is there anything about a wolf, a tiger, or a snake that frustrates the wild man's expectations. The sun, the moon, the stars in their unchanging courses, are objects of his reverent adoration. And it is to a large extent his experience of invariable operation that suggests to him the presence of divinity in the case of fire, of wind, or drifting clouds. He does not worship these phenomena because they are unusual, but because they are unintelligible forces; and in his ignorance of second causes, as Hobbes says, he attributes to all these things existence; they appear and disappear; they are animated by the souls or spirits whom he locates everywhere, and so they are gifted with the attributes of power. Undoubtedly this power is most clearly signified in things casual or unexpected, as in the case of an eclipse or a thunderstorm; but where every such sight, sound, or feeling whose cause is not obvious, from a headache to a hurricane, is thus ascribed to some capricious agency, it seems hardly worth while to provide the bewildered savage with a logical basis for his ideas by crediting him with a fundamental perception of uniformity in nature. It seems better to say at once that in his instinctive attempts to link effects with some kind of cause he infers, by human analogy, that the perpetual motion and change round him of things visible must come from the incessant activity of beings like himself, but invisible. The savage theory of causation, Mr. Jevons observes truly, is not fundamentally different from the scientific; the inductive methods form the common framework of both minds. But when he goes so far as to say that "the savage would probably be able to give his assent to all the principles of Mill's logic," and that the differences between the two minds are not formal but material, he overstrains the connexion to a point where it becomes misleading and tends to darken the clear vision of actual facts. Of course the mental processes, like the brain structure, are the same in the lowest Australian as in a Newton or a Darwin, and even a monkey can reason, within his tether, from effect to cause like a philosopher. But this statement of the vague imbecile guesses of wild creatures in the rigid terms of logic will bring little help to students, who should beware of too much method; and at any rate the simple empirical habit of always attaching an effect to some immediate cause might have been touched upon with a lighter hand.

One may readily acknowledge the careful and comprehensive treatment, the skill in marshalling facts to show their interconnection and to support conclusions, that are brought to bear in this book upon the genesis and growth of primitive beliefs. It seems to me, however, that the writer's argument is

complicated by the necessity of maintaining his initial thesis that mankind has from the beginning made a distinction between natural and supernatural. "Not all spirits," it is said, "are supernatural spirits." The man who believes the bowing tree or the leaping flame to be a thing like himself does not therefore believe it to be a supernatural being;" and I understand Mr. Jevons to hold that spirits of the dead are not ranked among the supernatural, that the ghost never becomes a god. The distinction seems exceedingly hard to draw, though much would depend on the precise meaning attached to the words "natural" and "supernatural"; and at any rate one may object that it is much too absolutely stated here. So also, I think, is the difference between ghosts and gods, a point quite as disputable as the converse theory, which Mr. Jevons rightly rejects, that all the gods of the earlier races, without any exceptions, were the spirits of dead men divinised. It may be observed that Mr. Jevons finds the dividing line between his two spiritual classes, and their separate origin, rather difficult to keep up, for he has to admit that "the spirits of the dead are occasionally credited with supernatural powers, that offerings to the dead become sacrifices to deities," that there is a tendency to assimilate the private cult of ancestors to the public worship of the gods, and that certain ancestors are, by some unexplained process, raised to the rank of gods. The evidence that such promotion does occur is irresistible, and has to be rebutted in this book by declaring that these ancestors must have been originally reckoned as divine, else would they not have been worshipped. "The fact is," it is said, "that ancestors known to be human were not worshipped as gods, and ancestors worshipped as gods were not believed to be human." How can Mr. Jevons, sitting in his library, be reasonably sure of that? And is it scientific to frame such positive generalisations regarding ideas and practices which vary infinitely at different periods and places, and which are always complex, entangled, and liable to become accidentally intermixed? It is also argued that the two systems—ancestor worship and public worship—could not have existed side by side if they had a common origin, because in that case one would have absorbed the other. But I much doubt whether this general assumption is incontrovertible, and I think it rests mainly upon notions of symmetry and consistency that are foreign to primitive religions, although they prevail among highly organised creeds, which do always absorb or destroy earlier and weaker forms.

Three very instructive chapters are devoted by Mr. Jevons to the subject of Taboo, a Polynesian word which has been adopted by the latest anthropologists to comprehend all the branches of what is certainly in one sense a universal institution. As thus used it includes not only that vast group of ideas and practices which attribute sanctity to certain persons, places, animals, and things tabooed, but also all ordinances of ceremonial purity or uncleanness, all prohibitory rules of caste and custom, all negative commands regulating social intercourse, especially between the sexes, and the etiquette which hedges round priests, kings, and women. The peculiarity of this code is that it operates mechanically, for any offence against it is punished inevitably, so that he who touches things forbidden is evilly infected as he would be by a virulent leprosy; and since the infection is transmissible he becomes an outcast. Any interdict laid on property or land, to preserve rights or keep off intruders, falls within this category; you can employ the taboo maker to taboo a diamond mine against inconvenient explorers; and a European ship's captain has called him in to frighten from his vessel troublesome native visitors. The whole notion of mysterious curses attaching to some original sin, or offence given to divinities, and descendible to posterity, belongs to the conception. It would seem indeed as if such notices as

"No admittance except on business," or "Trespassers beware," might be classed as modern examples of taboo, if one could only persuade people that some unintelligible penalty would surely follow unlawful entry. That any breach of taboo was unintentional or well intentioned, made in good faith or for a moral purpose, tells no more in mitigation of the consequences than in cases of small-pox or diphtheria; it is simply a matter of contagion.

Now in regard to a very large proportion of cases this system admits easily either of a religious or a rationalistic explanation; it is probably the aboriginal method of enforcing respect for rules, whether superstitious or sanitary, or merely fanciful, that became current in savage societies; it contains the germ of all caste ordinances and excommunications. Where the taboo seems inexplicable and plainly irrational there is, as Mr. Jevons points out, greater difficulty; though the incoherence of ideas, and the freaks of the wild ranging mind, of primitive folk, may well account for our failure to trace out a meaning. Mr. Jevons decides that the sentiment, as it appears in its lowest manifestations, cannot have been derived from experience, because in many instances "it is prior to and even contradictory to experience"; though this would seem difficult to prove. His conclusion is that taboo "is an inherent tendency of the human mind," and that the belief in its contagious properties is due to the association of ideas—

"In the history, or rather the prehistory, of man, taboo was never grossly material. It marked the awe of man in the presence of what he conceived — often mistakenly—to be the supernatural, and if his dread of contact with blood, babes, and corpses appears at first sight irrational, let us remember that in these, the three classes of objects which are inherently taboo, we have man in relation to the mystery of life and death, and in his affinity to that supernatural power which he conceived to be a spirit like himself."

This somewhat metaphysical theory will not altogether satisfy those who find it hard to believe that the primitive mind is capable of travelling beyond the limits of experience, hereditary and acquired; and who think that many senseless, unmeaning and absurd applications of the taboo are little more than childish guesses, or tricks, or the survivals of some impression left by those chances and coincidences which timid superstition is constantly misinterpreting. Nothing can be more irrational, for example, than a large class of omens; or than the connection discerned very recently in Persia between a stone set up by European surveyors and the failure of rain; yet it is quite evident that these foolish random conjectures easily harden into accepted beliefs, of which the origin becomes as utterly lost as the name of the first peasant or soothsayer who invented them. And it is not clear why we should insist upon finding a deeper explanation for any incomprehensible taboo, remembering that if Mr. Jevons is right, as I think he is, in observing that taboo, once established, was enforced, perpetuated, and developed as a social obligation, its earliest meaning would very soon be transfigured in the process. The mischievous and useless customs are weeded out; the prohibitions that have some sense or motive in them are retained; the taboo follows the evolutionary course of all other fallacies, and much of it was evidently bred out of the same haphazard conjecture as those which generate every kind of superstition.

In regard to totemism Mr. Jevons adopts the theory of which Mr. Frazer has been hitherto the leading exponent, and which we must endeavour to state very briefly. It is well known that one of the earliest forms of human society is the grouping of men in tribes or clans, of which every member is akin to the other, either by descent, real or imaginary, from a common stock or by the fiction of the blood covenant. These groups may be allies or may be enemies *inter se;* and the killing of any member by a hostile group creates a blood feud

between the two tribes. But upon the totemistic hypothesis every species of animal is also regarded by man as a tribe, friendly or hostile, and in choosing an ally he naturally prefers some species that possesses supernatural powers. Every animal of this chosen species is a member by kinship of the human tribe; and every tribesman becomes a blood relation not only of the beast, but of the god incarnate within him, who is thus the ally and protector of the tribe—that is to say, its totem. From these aboriginal roots Mr. Jevons traces the growth of all the widespread conceptions regarding the worship of animals and plants, the sanctity of certain species, the sacred feasts, the whole order of sacrificial rites, the slaying and eating of victims. "The mere existence of sacrifice is an indication of the former existence of totemism."

"Worship, as an act in its rudimentary stage, means only the sprinkling of blood on the altar; the blood sprinkled is that of the totem animal, and the only object of the rite is to renew the blood covenant between the totem clan and the totem species, and to procure the presence of the totem god. The idea of offering a sacrifice "to" a god is a notion which can only be developed in a later stage of totemism, when, on the one hand, the monolith has come to be identified with the god, and, on the other hand, the god is no longer in the animal."

In its primitive form the animal sacrifice and eating of the victim signified, we are told, a desire to assimilate, with the flesh, the supernatural powers of the sacred animal; the notion of the victim being eaten by the god was a later transformation of the original motive; and still later comes the idea of atonement, that one member of the tribe must die for the rest. Trees and plants were, like animals, adopted as tribal totems; and so, "it is to totemism that we owe the cultivation of plants as well as the domestication of animals." "Trivial pretexts for slaughtering victims were frequently invented," until what was at first eaten as a communistic sacrament became afterwards consumed for less mysterious purposes, with a few pious ejaculations as the sole relic of the primordial taboo.

Every consecutive link in the chain of this demonstration is carefully set out by Mr. Jevons, with a powerful array of examples collected from all parts of the earth to support each position. Those who read his book attentively will admire the conscientious workmanship, the skill and diligence with which an attractive theory is maintained, and they will be impressed by the curious colligation of strange and remote fancies with ideas which have since become world-wide religious conceptions, or with industries to which, like agriculture, we are indebted for the settlement of human society. With a very moderate amplification of these evolutionary principles one might trace almost every important idea and institution to the two sources of taboo and totemism. It must be understood that no more than the outline, on a very small scale, of these interesting speculations has been here given; and with this warning it may be confessed that they suggest to the critical reviewer a certain degree of scepticism. In the history of all religions, even of those which first began among the ancient civilisations of Asia (where all the historic faiths arose), the problem of origins is obscure and complex; the psychologic situation was even there so different from our own; the accidental circumstances, the causes and consequences, which determined the line of development are so imperfectly appreciable. In the much earlier stages of the human imagination, when it was uncontrolled by reflection and reasoning, the whole superstitious atmosphere is so clouded and capriciously changeful that it is impossible, in our opinion, to be sure of discovering the elementary motives, or to give orderly sequence to a miscellaneous heap of disorderly customs. To construct hypotheses out of the materials available, to make intelligent conjectures, is legitimate and even praiseworthy, so long as the student is fairly reminded that he must look for no certi-

tude, and that he must not allow his mind to be so possessed by a comprehensive theory as to prevent his examining facts, if he gets the opportunity, very closely and independently. There is a well-known saying of Bacon that "Method carrying a show of total and perfect knowledge has a tendency to generate acquiescence"; and for explorers in the field of folklore to be provided at starting with a master-key to the meaning of all queer ideas and customs is distinctly deleterious. It is apt to produce a kind of atrophy in the faculty of genuine observation.

This caution is the more necessary, because Mr. Jevons pushes his evolutionary argument very far, and indeed he has framed a considerable scheme of psychological development which embraces the whole domain of religious sentiment, from the rude natural imagery of the savage up to the lofty intuitions of devout philosophy and the mystic symbolism of the Churches. Man, he observes, began by attempting to synthesise the external and internal facts of consciousness by a reasoning process; animals were the first of the external objects that thus came to be worshipped, and totemism was the first form of that worship; the totem or tribal god being for a long time the single object of worship. "Totemism is the attempt to translate and express in outward action the union of the human will with the divine. Finally, "sacrifice and sacramental meal which followed on it are institutions which are or have been universal . . . but before there can be a sacramental meal there must be a sacrifice. That is to say, the whole human race for thousands of years has been educated to the conception that it was only through a divine sacrifice that perfect union with God was possible for man."

These extracts serve to indicate, of course imperfectly, the line of thought upon which "the bewildering details," as Mr. Jevons truly calls them, of early ritual and adoration are arranged in this book, and the connection which he discovers between the lowest and the highest efforts of human consciousness. There is much force and attractiveness in the demonstration of instinctive ideas animating all stages of religious belief, at times taking the shape of some monstrous chimera, and latterly becoming simplified and refined into deep intellectual convictions. Nor am I in the least prepared to deny that all gradations of religion are pervaded, from the bottom to the top, by a sense of awful dependence on the supernatural powers. Whether it is possible so to co-ordinate and exhibit the filiation of innumerable facts and fancies, to appraise their value and determine their meaning, as to establish confidently the train of associated conceptions which leads up to these conclusions, is the point which may well be considered doubtful. It is hard to believe that anthropological phenomena of this class, the mental operations of primitive mankind under widely different circumstances, are as yet reducible to general laws of growth and correlation like those which can be verified by physical science. Nor is it safe to borrow the terms of that science, or to rely upon analogies which it suggests; as, for instance, when we are told that differences of belief may be compared to the variations of organisms, so that whatever varieties of belief are not favoured by their environment will perish, while the rest will survive. These are, in fact, rather metaphors than sound analogies; you could not lay out the history of religion upon such a theory, nor use it to explain either the great cataclysms which have swept over Asia, or the persistence and revivals of certain radical conceptions; while if no more were meant than that beliefs are modified by circumstances, this would be the statement of an accepted fact. That the religious idea is migratory and incessantly mutable, that the seeds of superstition are blown to and fro by chance winds, we all know. It is equally certain that similar species are always springing up spontaneously out of

congenial soil, so that accident, as well as imitation, brings about unexpected resemblances quite independently of transmission by inherited descent.

The chapters in Mr. Jevons' book on "The Next Life," on "The Transmigration of Souls," and on "The Mysteries," are finely written, with a true insight into the needs and propensities out of which arose and were developed ideas which have enormously influenced the mind of humanity. And he is quite right in pointing to Egypt and to India as the two countries in which the aboriginal notion of the soul's survival was purified and exalted by the priesthood into a sublime metempsychosis, with the theory of reward or retribution in the next world superadded to satisfy the conscience, and to provide the discipline of hopes and fears. But his main object in examining these subjects is to "trace the career" of totemism, beginning with the view that after death man rejoined his totem, and assumed the shape of the plant or animal which he worshipped. Both in Egypt and in India the souls of the dead were understood to migrate into animals, though gradually, we are told, the totemist faith became generalised and dissociated from the particular animal, and the soul was allowed to take any such shape, until finally the virtuous were born again into a superior beast, and the wicked got something low or unclean. Now it is very probable that man's rudimentary animism did follow some such upward course as is here laid out, while it is certain that everywhere the superior priesthood trained and pruned the wild popular fancies into decent shapes and towards useful purposes. The question is whether we can really do more than register the broad lines of evolution, or whether it is necessary to insist on the universality of such customs as the totem and the taboo, in order to interpret by reference to them a miscellaneous quantity of customs which may possibly be akin, but which may have had, for all we can tell, other motives and origins. Let us take, for example, the custom (observed also by Miss Kingsley in West Africa) of savages daubing themselves with white clay, a kind of war painting. "War," says Mr. Jevons, "is to the savage a sacred function; the tribal god himself fights for his clan, the warriors are engaged in his service; as such they are taboo and dangerous, and they notify the fact by donning war paint." In corroboration of this general proposition the fact is mentioned that in Greece, when a novice was to be initiated to the mysteries, he was plastered with white clay as a cleansing process. But is it demonstrable that the ceremonious plastering had anything to do with the war painting? A passage is quoted from Herodotus, who has told us that when the Phocians consulted a Mantis upon ways and means of defeating the Thessalians he made six hundred of them plaster themselves with white clay, and sent them to make a night attack, which was entirely successful. This is regarded by Herodotus as a clever stratagem, whereby the Phocians knew each other in the darkness; it reappears in the old French wars as the *camisade*, which means that the assailants wore their white shirts over their armour for fighting at night. But Mr. Jevons holds that Herodotus missed the real point, which was "That warriors should be prepared for battle by previous purification and dedication to the gods." A little straining of this theory would cover the suggestion that all military uniforms may lay claim to a long descent through warpaint and other fantastic decorations from the garb of taboo; the object of distinguishing friend from foe being regarded as modern and secondary. I must record my own impression that these hypotheses flourish better in the modern scientific hothouse than in the open air among the rough emergencies of military life. Herodotus was the best observer of all ancient travellers, and while he had a good eye for divine things in their proper place, he lived among the realities of a fighting time. Mr. Jevons proceeds to remark that "the actor, like

the warrior, was a sacred person during the discharge of his functions," that the satyric clowns wore goat-skins, and that the actor smeared his face with lees of wine to show that he was under the protection of the wine god—another clear case of totem and taboo. So it may have been, for all we know, nevertheless there is something far-fetched and unnecessary about such a derivation.

I have permitted myself to pass some criticisms upon the leading generalisations relied upon in this book, because the principle of evolution seems in these post-Darwinian days to have obtained almost too complete a mastery over the minds of those engaged in all branches of research. With the vast increase of data requiring some kind of systematic and rational adjustment to human capacity, the employment of this dominant hypotheses has spread from the handling of things to the assortment of ideas, and the most fascinating study is that of the religious idea. But in that study we are dealing with the strange and obscure contents of fantastic imagination, and with the most recondite problems of primitive psychology. In such a region hypotheses are as easy to frame as they are hard to verify; and I am much inclined to agree with Miss Kingsley's warning to explorers that they must not set out with foregone conclusions, but must on the contrary leave at home all such baggage, with the other ingenious luxuries of civilisation. Nevertheless Mr. Jevons does not insist dogmatically upon his own views, while the lucidity of his exposition and the large repertory of facts from which he draws his illustrations are certainly impressive and possibly persuasive. The book also contains many truly philosophical remarks and reservations, and before taking leave of the author I may quote the following passage, which may be taken as explaining by analogy his general view of the evolution of belief:—

"The desire to unify our experience is a perennial need of human nature. The faith that it can be unified is not peculiar to religion, but is the base of all science. The track by which science has marched in its conquest of nature is marked by the ruins of abandoned hypotheses. One hypothesis is cast aside in favour of another which explains a greater number of facts; and though no hypothesis, not even evolution, accounts for all the facts of the physical universe (*i.e.* for all the external facts of consciousness), yet no man of science believes that the facts are incapable of explanation. On the contrary, he believes that they are only waiting for the right hypothesis and that then they will all fall into line."

It is from this standpoint, if I rightly understand him, that Mr. Jevons regards all the evidence of man's religious acts and feelings; and upon this principle he desires to establish some orderly scheme of their harmonious and consistent development. Much doubt may be permitted whether in this department of research the data are as surely ascertainable, or the inferences as verifiable, as in the purely physical sciences which rely on sight and touch, on actual experiment instead of on ancient record and incomplete observation, or possibly on hearsay. Nevertheless we may freely acknowledge and admire the philosophic spirit, the sympathetic appreciation of man's striving upward out of darkness towards light, which Mr. Jevons has exhibited in his endeavour to decipher the obscure and intricate riddles of primitive religion.

. . . . . .

Professor Max Müller's book is the work of a distinguished scholar, who, after having devoted many years to the building up of the science of mythology upon a linguistic basis, has now resolved once more to affirm and energetically defend his main position. It has been so often and so strenuously attacked that some have imagined it to have become untenable and even to have been abandoned; but Professor Max Müller has no thought of surrender. On the contrary, he has strengthened and provisioned it with vigorous arguments and fresh evidence; while he is so far from retreating that he makes formidable sallies upon his adversaries. To attempt in a few pages, any adequate review of such an

important contribution to the literature of religious origins, would be in the highest degree presumptuous, especially as etymologic controversies lie beyond my competence. I shall therefore touch only on those points in his book which contravene or bear down upon the theories that have just been under some examination.

Although mythology does not, of course, cover the whole ground occupied by the question of religious origins, yet the interpretation of myths is so essentially concerned with the evolution of beliefs that on this subject a clear difference of system is fundamental. Mr. Jevons makes no use of etymologic analysis, whereby the original and subsequent meanings of a divine name or legend can be extracted out of the comparative study of cognate languages. To Professor Max Müller, on the other hand, this method is of cardinal efficiency as a clue and a test; he maintains that the *hyponoia*, the underlying and related ideas, the way to unlock all the secrets of Aryan mythology, the solution of all its riddles, are to be found in the scrutiny of linguistic anatomy, in the rules of phonetic change, and the maladies of words. His attitude upon all these subjects, upon the modes of primitive thought, upon the fundamental analogy at the base of all religious conceptions, is too well known to need exposition here; though he has carefully restated them in the book now before us. That "the gods were originally personified representatives of the most prominent phenomena of nature," and that natural events were taken as the acts of these representatives, is the vital principle upon which he takes his stand, and whoever does not hold this faith regarding the generation of the Aryan divinities is in mortal error. As the deeds of great men were said to be god-like, so, conversely, the stories current about the Nature gods came to be told of real heroes or heroines, and as it is not possible to speak of the weather without personifying in speech the elements, so out of words meaning the sky, the clouds, rain, and thunder were evolved the great figures of polytheism; they arose, not only out of a necessity of thought, but also out of a necessity of language. The irrational and immoral characteristics of the classic deities should not, we are told, be explained as survivals from prehistoric savagery; they are distorted misunderstandings of naturalistic allegory, derived from the first abstract conceptions of physical forces; for "the foundation of all mythology was physical." It is true that other influences and impressions soon get to work upon the primary plastic material, that in later stages the authentic facts of human deeds or suffering become embedded in the primordial fiction; but those who are ready to discover historical fragments in mythology "ought never to forget that, in this marriage between myth and fact, myth comes first." It is not until a solar hero has first been created that any other real hero can be called Hêrakles, and his achievements can be sung as the achievements of Hêrakles. In short, the gods impersonated the sense of will and design stamped upon the primitive mind by the action of the elements; they were the actors in the great drama of Nature; and man's worship of them expressed his feeling of dependence upon those embodiments of the manifest yet mysterious powers which surrounded him.

So powerfully and persuasively is this comprehensive theory stated that, upon the principle of avoiding foregone conclusions as injurious to independent enquiry, one would be inclined to warn off all beginners in folklore from the study of these volumes, and to place them upon Miss Kingsley's index among the books which are dangerous for novices. In his own bright Aryan kingdom the philologist is supreme: he will have nothing to do with the outer barbarian; he takes slight account of customs and tales picked up among wild folk without any scientific knowledge of their language. Not much can be gained, in Professor

Max Müller's opinion, by using such general terms as animism, totemism, fetishism, as solvents of mythological problems; and he rightly declines to trace back all theriolatry to totemism, particularly since some of the highest authorities on the myths and customs of savage races are by no means on the side of the thoroughgoing totemist. Dr. Codrington, whose book is the standard work on Melanesian folklore, has collected many specimens of ancestral animals revered and spared by various families or kindred groups; and not only the practice, but the word "taboo," is indigenous in the South Pacific Islands. But in regard to the full-blown totemistic system Dr. Codrington is decidedly sceptical; and for the taboo custom, which is a prohibition with a curse, he cites various examples showing its accidental and arbitrary character, and indicating that for an explanation one need go no further than the world-wide and very useful practice, indispensable to all early law-givers, of investing general rules and even casual orders with divine sanction. In short, if you spread out a custom so as to bring into affinity with it or derivation from it everything belonging to the same category of notions or habits, the whole theory is reduced to the recognition of some general instinct or universal human tendency, for which one designation or label is neither better nor more significant than another.

The ethnological school, as led by Mr. Andrew Lang and Mr. Jevons, would hunt an Aryan myth or custom back to a state of pre-existent savagery, discover its germs in similar beliefs or practices prevalent among Red Indians or Andaman Islanders. This is one of the capital points upon which Professor Max Müller resolutely joins issue. Granted, he says, that the Aryans must have been savages, it does not follow that the Aryan savage, in his elaboration of myths and customs, acted exactly like other savages.

"Ancient languages, ancient beliefs and customs were not formed according to rule. Even if we were to admit that all human beings were born alike, their surroundings have always been very different, and their intellectual productions must have differed in consequence. Mythology is . . . determined in its growth by ever so many accidental circumstances, by ever so many human and inhuman influences, even by individual poets and sages. . . . It forms an immense conglomerate which excludes hardly anything that has ever passed through the mind of man."

This is undoubtedly sound reasoning; and we may add the observation that it should be applied impartially to all methods of research into the origin of religious ideas. The attempt to trace out the long winding course of any particular idea or practice up to its ultimate source entangles the explorer in an intricate maze of queer habits and hallucinations, of which the nature and significance have really become undecipherable; the line is crossed, diverted, and ravelled until the clue becomes lost or erased; nor is it possible to stop at any one spot in the journey, and proclaim that the source is found. To show that some rite or worship has a clear historical origin, or began within the memory of competent witnesses, is of no avail; the folklorist or the mythologist will so analyse and rearrange the facts as to prove that the idea underlying the story came from remoter ages, or will maintain that the true incident was caught up into the atmosphere of a solar myth, and precipitated again upon earth in the shape of a divine legend. As in the metaphysical order all religions may be melted down into pantheism; so there is hardly any institution or article of faith, or thought that wanders through eternity, that may not be gently and reverently relegated through many transformations to its far-off birthplace among the elementary fictions or experiences of humanity; it can be provided with a home in the prolific bosom of some capacious theory. Totemism has been disinterred by Professor Sayce from the ruins of ancient Babylon; and the heraldic monsters of our own day might easily claim descent from the tribal worship of animals; the story that Robert Bruce

took heart to persevere in his enterprise by watching a spider at its web, may be traced, whether authentic or not, to a long-descended legend or parable. And even the horror of cats which possesses a distinguished soldier of our own day may be plausibly identified with the superstitious awe felt by earlier heroes in the presence of animals that were taboo. All warriors, indeed, are said to be themselves taboo, by reason of their sacred profession; insomuch that of late it has been gravely asserted that an ordinance prevailing among certain fighting tribes of the Hindu Kûsh, which enjoins abstinence from women during war time, is a sort of taboo; although a much more practical motive lies ready to hand.

It is easy, indeed, to show that the scientific folklorist often rides his hobby too hard and too far, and does violence to the evolutionary principle, when he uses it to prove that some modern rite or rule, which can be accounted for historically or by common sense, is allied by descent to a savage custom, nationalised and modified by changing environments. On the other hand, some of Professor Max Müller's illustrations of his general thesis, that "All Vedic gods, nay, all Aryan gods, were in the beginning physical," may still be received, even by good comparative mythologists, with respectful hesitation. That a large number of the divine shapes and legends are mainly personifications and poetic remains of natural appearances and forces is undeniable; but the determined application of etymological analysis, as if it were an infallible instrument or chemical test, produces results which strain the credit of an otherwise legitimate process. Without making any pretension to meddle with questions of high scholarship, I may refer for an example to the section in which, after pronouncing Leda to be a representative of the first grey dawn, the Vedic Sura*n*yû, and the swan to mean the sun, the writer tells us that Leda's sons, the Dioskouroi, are day and night, and that her daughter Helena can be nothing but the beautiful dawn. So the vivid scenes and characters of the Iliad melt away into mythological cloudland. Yet the abduction of women and disputes over beautiful brides have certainly been frequent causes of fighting in all rude days. We have the popular story of La Cava's ravishment, which brought the Moors into Spain. We know that a dispute over betrothals caused a long and bloody war among the Indian Rajpúts; and who is to assure us that Homer's story is not historically founded on some such very probable fact. Again, the watchdog, who guards the gate of house or village, has been known everywhere; nor does the legend which posted him at the gate of Hell seem to need any deeper explanation than universal custom transferred from the upper to the lower world. Professor Max Müller, however, insists in this book on his well-known view that the word Kerberos is connected with the name of night (Sárvarî), of which he is said to be a representative.

"If," he goes on to say, "it be asked what could be the meaning of the fight of Hêrakles with Kerberos, and of his dragging him forth from Hades if only for a short time, that is a question difficult to answer in any case. But there is no reason why it should not have arisen from some proverbial saying that the rising sun had grappled with the darkness of the night, and let it fall into the abyss the very moment he himself had risen to the sky victorious."

There is certainly no reason why such conjectures should not be hazarded; although the eminent scholar who makes them must be aware that he has thereby quitted his own special domain of high scholarship, and has generously offered battle upon the open field of ingenious guesswork and comparative probabilities, where all suggestions are unverifiable and of disputable value.

I must be content, however, with passing rapidly over a book in which the author throws down a bold challenge to his numerous adversaries, and fairly offers to renew the battle upon well-known ground. Scholarship and philo-

logy rely mainly for evidence on the past; with the present they have little to do; and the Solar Myth finds slender warrant among the ascertainable beliefs and worships of the contemporary savage. The folklorist and the traveller among wild folk undertake to compare and correct the traditions and records of the past by actual observation of primitive societies; they do not reject Vedic texts or Greek fables, they seek rather to reconcile classic paganism with modern folklore and barbarous superstitions; their ambition is to explain the grand procession of religious ideas, the long history of human credulity, upon a system that will include all periods and peoples, and will entirely exclude none of the rival theories. I must express a doubt whether any complete synthesis of religious evolution is possible, and whether the modern mind, which is unsatisfied with anything that is not consistent, precise, and logical, is a fit instrument for hewing into symmetrical shape the rude conglomerate blocks of superstition in the dark ages. In every chain of proof there are always missing links which have to be supplied at haphazard; in the piecing together of a great jumble of miscellaneous facts, there are many which cannot be fitted in, are anomalous, or even contradictory, and which must be rejected as spurious or silently thrown aside. They are naturally valued according to the use that can be made of them, so that upon this system a story extracted from some ancient writer, or the metaphor of an Indo-Aryan hymn, ranks equally with the latest myth-makings brought home by missionaries from Polynesia or Guiana.

Many high authorities will consider that these conclusions are too sceptical, and that the construction of trustworthy hypotheses upon materials carefully tabulated, assorted, and cemented, is well within the resources of science. Undoubtedly the immense information available in these days can be arranged upon general plans, and the broad lines of development followed by religious ideas can be demarcated, mainly because human imagination, like human inventiveness in dealing with things social and political, has always kept within certain definite channels. But any one who desires fairly to realise the difficulty of tracing any particular story, fact or fancy to its actual origin, may do so by selecting some quaint custom or belief which has survived to our own day, with a clear historic pedigree, and considering what likelihood there would be of tracing it back to its real source, without the aid of authentic history. Who could ever discover, by the comparative method, the true reason why Guy Fawkes is carried round on 5th November, why the curfew tolls the knell of parting day, why oak sprigs are worn on 29th May, or even primroses on a fixed date in April? It will be as easy, in the absence of true record, to hang a far-fetched theory of religious symbolism upon the oak-sprig as upon the mistletoe. A strong savour of myth and totemism could probably be detected in all these things, and in others that might be easily added. Again, it is quite possible to bring within the sphere of taboo and totemism some of the chief rites and ceremonies of the three great historical religions, and indeed the evolution of belief is carried up to this point, in certain cases, by Mr. Jevons and others. Yet if we suppose the true record of the origin of Christianity and Islam, or even of Buddhism, to have been entirely lost, what a completely false and misleading theory regarding the causes and circumstances which governed the rise and growth of these rites and creeds might have been constructed out of their inevitable connection with deep-rooted aboriginal instincts, out of fantastic analogies, and out of philosophic speculations which draw largely upon imaginative subtlety!

The attempt to solve the problem of origins requires, as Renan has said, a keen eye to discriminate between things certain, probable, and plausible, a profound sense of the realities of life, and

the faculty of appreciating strange and remote psychological situations. And even with all these rare qualities, it is very difficult to attain certitude in the problem's solution. There must be always wide gaps and obscure interspaces where one can only measure possibilities, draw cautious inferences, note half-seen indications, and where after all one can but choose the least unlikely clue among many. All that can be done, for the most part, is to apprehend clearly the general course and character of prehistoric religion, to mark its outlines and prominent features, to catch its tone and colour, and so to preserve some true impression of social and intellectual states through which the foremost nations of the world have passed, and which still survive among many races for whose welfare the British people are directly responsible.

THE END

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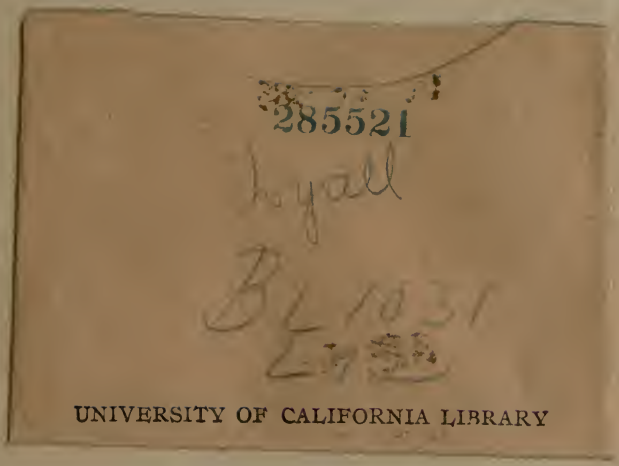
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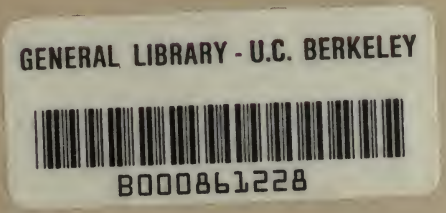
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